

We Walk with Christ

Youth
Catechism

The background is a solid orange color. It features several stylized religious illustrations in blue and yellow. In the top left, a blue boat with yellow stripes is on wavy blue lines. In the top right, a yellow angel with large wings and a halo plays a trumpet. In the middle left, there are blue clouds, a yellow sun with rays, and a yellow crescent moon. In the middle right, there is a yellow vine with leaves and a circular emblem. In the bottom right, a yellow angel with large wings and a halo sits on a throne. In the bottom center, a yellow figure with a halo and outstretched arms stands on a yellow path, surrounded by a group of yellow figures with halos. The title 'We Walk with Christ' is written in large, bold, blue letters across the center. Below it, the words 'Youth Catechism' are written in smaller, bold, white letters.

We Walk with Christ

**Youth
Catechism**



The Synod of Bishops of the
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church

We Walk with Christ

Youth Catechism

Kyiv · Edmonton · 2023



Citation from Holy Scripture



Citation from liturgical texts



Citation from the works of the Church Fathers



Citation from the UGCC Catechism Christ — Our Pascha

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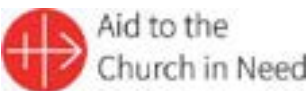
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THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halych

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Dear Young Men and Young Women in Christ,

Youth is a special period in a person's life. This is a time when a young person learns about himself or herself, discovers in himself or herself previously unknown forces and aspirations, feelings and abilities. This is a time to personally search for the Genuine One, the True One, the Eternal One, and the Beautiful One. Being young men and young women is a vocation to know their loving God and the mystery of his pre-eternal plan for them, to personally experience his eternal love and to learn from him to love and be loved.

Youth is usually characterized by having an open, passionate heart, a flexible inquisitive mind, and a decisive character that acutely reacts to

falsehood, injustice and wrongdoing. I am overjoyed and appreciate the opportunity along with you to seek answers to the questions and needs which resonate in your hearts: how are young Christians of the twenty-first century to live in a modern world, where every day instead of the truth, you are exposed to “things that are fake,” and, instead of the Genuine One, you encounter fake products and assorted replacements, where the voice of God’s Word is easily “diluted” given the vicious posts on social networks without any personal responsibility for what was said or written? How can we remain Christ’s friends in the context of the challenges of the current global culture? How can we become builders of God’s Kingdom, while remaining faithful citizens of our country?

I invite you to discover the answers to these and other questions, becoming participants of an enthusiastic journey and pilgrimage on the eye-catching pages of the **We Walk with Christ Youth Catechism**. Here you will join a group of your peers-pilgrims from Ukraine and the world, who are the embodiment of a young person today, the young face of the Church. Together with a spiritual guide you will explore by deepening your faith, by growing in God’s wisdom, and by growing amid life’s struggles in the acquisition of Christian virtues. This will be a way marked by the most important truths of our faith, which are revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ and which our Church faithfully has preserved and passed on to future generations in a rich spiritual heritage of the great ascetics and the righteous of our people.

It is my sincere hope that, in experiencing this journey of faith and getting to know God, you would surely want to share your joyful story with others. And so, I invite you, young believers of our Church, to go into the world, into your actual real-life situations, proclaiming the Good News about what God has done for humankind in Christ, the “pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2). Walk through the darkness of disbelief and the “motionlessness” of indifference, through the challenges of the modern world and the difficulties of forming of your identity, through space and time, through histories and cultures — strengthened with the spiritual experience of our martyrs and confessors to strengthen and build up our Church.

Today, the world is looking for the truth of the Gospel, the truth proclaimed genuinely and enthusiastically with the mouths and entire lives

of young people, the faithful friends of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Word of God. That is why **we walk with Christ!**

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!



Given in Kyiv
at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, on the day of the
holy and righteous ancestors of God Joachim and Anna, September 22,
2020 A.D.

Introduction

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

Lk 24:13-14

In the Holy Scripture of the New Testament, in the Gospel of Luke, there is a description of a journey made by Jesus Christ's two disciples to Emmaus, a village near Jerusalem. These men were shocked by the events they had witnessed the day before. After all, their Master was arrested, unfairly convicted, and cruelly executed on the Cross. They experienced a shattering of their hopes and had to flee from potential persecution.

And today many young people are experiencing life crises and dreading the next day. They also want to understand how they, as Christians of the twenty-first century, can put into practice the values of the Gospel in their lives, and how they are to be the bearers of God's love and mercy.

With this Catechism, the Ukrainian Catholic Church invites young people to learn about their faith by making a pilgrimage to our holy sites. During this trip everyone can be reminded of the most important truths of our faith revealed to humankind in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. He is "the pioneer and perfecter of the faith" (Heb 12:2), "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), our guide on the way of life, our Pascha! By engaging with Father Andrii — the priest and spiritual guide of this pilgrimage — we will find the sought-after answers.

So let us walk with Christ!



More and more people have joined the group of young pilgrims standing near the ancient Church — the Sophia of Kyiv. Among them are Chrystyna from Lviv and Serhii from Luhansk, Martyn from Canada along with Marichka from Italy, Dmytro from Kazakhstan, and Daryna from Brazil. As the personification of the youth of our Church, they have gathered here to go on a pilgrimage to the greatest Ukrainian holy sites together with Father Andrii, their spiritual mentor.

It is precisely from here, from this Sophia — the heart of the Kyivan Church — that this spiritual journey has its starting point. Later, the pilgrims will travel to Saint George's Church in Lviv — the stronghold of our faith. Afterwards, the Sophia of Rome, the witness of our Church's universal nature, will greet them. Next, their way will again point to Kyiv, to the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ— the symbol of the renewal of our Church and of our people to new life.

Each one of the pilgrims hopes to better understand his or her personal life, his or her relationships with parents, friends, and loved ones. Their youthful energy inspires them to seek answers that can only be given by the One who is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6).

Who are these young people?



For **Chrystyna** from Lviv nineteen years have passed. The Lord has provided this young girl with a creative and dreamy nature: in her “talented hands” everything turns into a work of art.

Chrystyna lives with her mother. She saw her father in family photos. He left them as soon as he learned of his newborn daughter’s diagnosis — Chrystyna has often thought about her father..

Her parish priest taught about Christian forgiveness. She would like to forgive her father everything, but how?

The announcement of a chance to join those participating in the pilgrimage really spoke to her, a young girl who uses a wheelchair, as it would be an opportunity to find in her heart the healing power of forgiveness. Despite her physical limitations, Chrystyna clings to a tenacious hope that, with God’s help and the support of the other pilgrims, she will be able to breeze through this journey.



Martyn's parents were born near Toronto, but their grandparents came to Canada at some point during the last century. Martyn enjoyed going to church with his parents, caroling during the feast of the Nativity, and celebrating Pascha. After graduating from high school, Martyn began studying at a prestigious university in Canada. Even so, the young man kept frequently having new questions about the meaning of life, about love and friendship, answers to which he could not find even within the walls of his university. So, when his parents invited him to join the pilgrimage, he agreed, hoping to find those answers that were so important to him.



Daryna from Brazil has been troubled by the thought of monastic life for the past few months. However, she was afraid to voice it in the presence of others. After all, her parents dreamed of grandchildren and often hinted to Daryna about marriage. That being the case, there could be no talk of monastic vows.

Daryna is hoping to reach a mutual understanding with her parents. And when she learned that a pilgrimage was being organized to Ukraine, she decided that participating in the pilgrimage would make her stronger in her vocation, and that the Lord would suggest the proper words.



Serhii from Luhansk has been living apart from his parents for a long time. This young man was firmly convinced that only the strongest survive in life, that is why he has devoted a lot of time to sports and was even thinking about a career in the military.

Somehow, quite by accident, Serhii walked into a church during a divine service. What he heard and saw impressed him. Serhii recalled that he had been baptized and could even say some prayers: he keeps on reciting the *Our Father* and *Rejoice, O Virgin Mother of God* every day before going to bed. He decided to delve deeper into his new feelings. Having come across a message on the internet about a youth pilgrimage, he decided to join.



Marichka lives in Italy with her mother. She went to school there, where she became particularly interested in the Social Sciences. Beginning in her childhood, she dreamed of building a just society in which everyone would be provided with equal opportunities. At the same time, Marichka is still hurt by her parents' separation. During the years that she and her mother lived in Italy, her father remained in Ukraine. Contacts with him became less and less frequent, and eventually they stopped altogether. Marichka really wants to see her father, and the pilgrimage can become an opportunity to meet him.



Dmytro from Karaganda has recently had to deal with the death of his mother. It was difficult for the young man to accept this loss for a considerable length of time. At times he rebelled — against the pain, against death, against God who permitted them. Dmytro is joining this pilgrimage with deep sadness, but at the same time with the hope of overcoming the pain of his loss, as well as to visit the land of his parents, about which they often told him.

In charge of this youth pilgrimage, **Father Andrii** was looking forward to the day when he was going to meet these young people, and he prayed for the success of this pilgrimage. When Day One arrived, he joyfully greeted those participating in the pilgrimage. Here, in Kyiv, in Sophia Square, Chrystyna, Martyn, Daryna, Serhii, Marichka, Dmytro, and Father Andrii met for the first time and became acquainted with each other.



Chapter One

We Believe



While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ... Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Lk 24:15-17, 27

They talked and argued so much that they didn't even notice that Someone else had joined them. Wondering how he might not know about the events in Jerusalem, they told him with disappointment about all that had happened and what they had hoped for, and now they doubted: Is Jesus the One who will save us?

And what are our hopes and doubts? Do we, young Christians of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, know God really? Let us try to understand this.





The Cathedral of Saint Sophia – the Wisdom of God Kyiv, 1037

With a most genuine trepidation in their hearts, the young pilgrims set foot in the Sophia of Kyiv, immersing themselves in a beautiful sacred space that reflects the age-old experience of the faith lived out by their

ancestors. The Oranta Mother of God looked at them with gentle eyes from under the church's vaults. Built in the first half of the eleventh century by Kyivan princes, the Cathedral of Saint Sophia, the Wisdom of God, became truly a wonder, dear to every Ukrainian soul.

From this cathedral the Christian faith and culture kept inspiring and reviving the consciousness of our people. Here the princes and metropolitans of Kyiv were "installed" on their thrones, here Ukrainian hearts prayed for peace and a better fate for their homeland.

To this day, the Cathedral is an "expressive symbol of the original integrity and fullness of the unified and indivisible Church of Kyiv" (His Beatitude Sviatoslav).

Theme 1

Divine Revelation



The Oranta – a mosaic in the central apse of Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv



Rejoice, vessel of the Wisdom of God.

Rejoice, unbreachable wall of the state.

9th and 12th Ikoses of the Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Mother of God



By revealing himself, God, who in his essence is unknowable, wishes to make people capable of responding to him, and of knowing him, and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity.

Christ — Our Pascha, 18



Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

Heb 1:1-2

Gazing upwards, Martyn exclaimed: What a wonderful icon of the Mother of God! Is Mary praying?

Father Andrii: Yes, the Most Holy Mother of God is praying, and in her praying she reveals the beauty of God in humankind. When a person prays, he or she is truly quite beautiful. By her prayerful “Yes” Mary became the Mother of the Saviour, but also “the vessel of the Wisdom of God.” And wisdom is the Spirit of God who loves humankind (compare Wis 1:6).

The Most Holy Mother of God is also a living image of the embodiment of God’s love for humankind, his wisdom, and therefore a model for our personal and social life. That is why our ancestors called the Mother of God “the unbreachable wall of the state.” They dedicated the main church of our land to Saint Sophia — the Wisdom of God, its vessel is the Most Holy Mother of God.

The word “Oranta” translated from Latin means *she who prays*. Her prayer is symbolized by raised hands. This is the way praying Christians were depicted on the walls of the catacombs in Rome from the third to the fifth centuries. The divine motherhood of Mary is confirmed by the Greek letters ΜΡΘΥ (Μήτηρ Θεού— the Mother of God) on both sides of her head. Her ever-virginity is shown by three stars or crosses on her cloak: she remains a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ. Mary is clothed with grace as with a garment. This is symbolized by the purple border-in-gold coat (the grace of God) on a blue tunic-dress, the symbol of human nature. The cuffs and a handkerchief in her belt are signs of her liturgical service to the faithful: “Today the Virgin stands

before us in the church and together with the choirs of saints invisibly prays to God for us” (Kontakion on the Feast of the Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God).

In addition to the fact that the *Oranta* Mother of God personifies humankind’s prayer which is celebrated in the Church, she is also the “vessel” of Christ, the Wisdom of God (in Greek, *Sophia*). This is exactly why this icon is central in Saint Sophia’s Cathedral in Kyiv.

Marichka: And what is the “Wisdom of God”?

Father Andrii: The Wisdom of God is not “something,” but Someone — the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. The Lord was pleased for a person to encounter him and come to know him. A person can also comprehend the presence of the Creator in the universe by the power of his or her own mind, but he or she cannot understand for themselves who God really is. But, “God is love” (1 Jn 4:16), and so he chose to reveal himself to humankind, to reveal himself in truth, and to invite humankind to communion and participation in his divine life. Only in God can a person be truly happy.

Chrystyna: Does God really want us to be happy?

Father Andrii: He really does want this. This why the heavenly Father on his own reveals to humankind the majestic plan of his love. The Lord tirelessly seeks to draw closer to us: he reveals himself in the created world, he speaks to us through the voice of conscience. In the history of a chosen people, through righteous men and righteous women, he gradually prepares humankind to encounter him in the incarnation of his Son, who became human in the fullness of time. Jesus Christ, in his word and works, announced to humankind the Gospel — the Good News, in which, freed from slavery to sin, we receive the gift of new life.



You brought us from nothingness into being and, after we fell, you raised us up again. You did not cease doing everything until you led us to heaven and granted us your future kingdom.

Serhii: And how does Divine Revelation take place?

Father Andrii: From the fullness of his love, God the Creator calls forth the whole world into being. The beauty of the sunrise and the starry sky, the order and organization of the universe, the wonderful harmony of being — all this testifies to the incomprehensible greatness of God himself, to his wisdom, and to the indescribable beauty of his plan.

Everything that has arisen, the Creator called forth into being through his Word — the Son of God: “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being” (Jn 1:3). God reveals himself in the created world, and especially — in calling forth humankind into being, which he created in his own image (compare Gn 1:27). The Creator reveals himself to humankind in order to make it a partaker of his divine nature.

The Creator does not abandon humankind after the fall of Adam and Eve. Already in Paradise, he promises our ancestors salvation, and later makes a covenant with Noah and through him — with all living creatures. He then calls Abraham on a long journey to the land he promised him and assures him that he will be the father of countless descendants.



[God] desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Tim 2:4



“The Hospitality of Abraham” (The Old Testament Trinity) (Gen 18:1-15). The story of this icon is the story of the visit of Patriarch Abraham by three men. The first images of Abraham’s hospitality appeared on the walls of the Catacombs in Rome. Eventually, the three men begin to be depicted on the icons as winged angels who bring Abraham the “good news” of the birth of a descendant. The three angels symbolize the trinitarian character of God— the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit —without identifying specific angels with any of the Persons of the Trinity. The oak of Mamre (Gen 18:1), the tree under which Abraham rested when the men visited him, symbolizes here the tree of life (Gen 2:9; 3:24), the prefigurations of the saving sacrifice of the Son of God. Abraham and Sarah represent each person at the time of their encounter with the Lord in the Most Holy Trinity.

Abraham and Sarah had no children, but Abraham’s faith made him worthy to become the father of Isaac and of all who believed. God always remains faithful to his covenant with Abraham and his descendants, revealing himself as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:15).

The Lord leads the people of Israel out of Egyptian captivity, cares for them during their forty-year journey through the wilderness, makes a covenant with them on Mount Sinai with the help of the prophet Moses, gives them the Ten Commandments, and leads them into the Promised Land.

Despite numerous examples of this people’s infidelity, their constant grievances, and idolatry, the Lord remains faithful to his covenant. He does

not leave his people to their enemies, he teaches them, he guides them to the right path, he himself becomes the focus of uniting the people and their faithful defender: “I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev 26:12).

Daryna: Why is the history of the people of Israel so important to us?

Father Andrii: Through the history of the people of Israel, the Lord prepares humankind to meet his Son, who fully reveals God to the world. The chosen people are called to preserve the covenant of their parents with God, to be a “holy people” (Ex 19:6). The Lord gives Israel his Law and teaches people to live in union with him and in peace with one another. The Lord is preparing his people to become the basis for the formation of a new people of God — the Church, vital to the unity of those who are chosen in Christ from all corners of the earth.

The prophets work to bring Israel to a more perfect state, cleansing it from the dangers of idolatry, and teaching justice and mercy to the poor and weak. They are gradually preparing humankind to accept the Gospel of Christ.

Jesus, like his mother and his guardian, Saint Joseph, and his early followers, came from the people of Israel. Israel becomes an example of faith for all of us who, like Abraham, believed in the Word through which the pre-eternal Lord addressed humankind.

For a long time, the Lord has been preparing humankind to encounter his very Self in the Person of his Son: “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known” (Jn 1:18). The incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, reveals the Father to the people.

The Church sees in Jesus Christ the fullness of all Revelation. He is the definitive Word by which the merciful God, the Creator and Almighty Ruler of the universe, reveals his very Self in the incomprehensible plan of his wisdom. In Jesus Christ, the Lord said everything a person needs in order to have life and have it abundantly (compare Jn 10:10). We should not expect some other Revelation.



Moses hands over the tablets of the covenant to the people of Israel

“God is love” (1 Jn 4:16). Out of the fullness of his love, the Lord decided to reveal himself to humankind so that it might have life and have it abundantly (compare Jn 10:10).

God gradually reveals the mystery of his wisdom in words and actions.

God reveals himself in the creation of the world. He makes a covenant with Noah, and through him with all living creatures.

The Lord called Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. Through Moses, the Creator gives the Law to his people, and through the prophets he prepares humankind to receive the saving Gospel. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, is the mediator and fullness of all Revelation.



Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, the God of Christians, for he has visited and redeemed his people, for he has not abandoned his creatures to remain until the end in the grip of the darkness of idolatry and to perish in the worship of demons. For first he justified the tribe of Abraham through the tablets and the Law; then through his Son he redeemed all the nations;

through the Gospel and through baptism he brought them to regeneration to rebirth into the life eternal. Let us therefore praise him and glorify him unceasingly, as he is praised unceasingly by the angels; and let us worship him constantly, as he is worshiped constantly by the cherubim and the seraphim; for in his watchfulness he has watched over his people. He himself saved us: neither an envoy nor a messenger. He visited earth not as a vision, but truly in the flesh, he suffered for us even unto the grace, and he resurrected us together with himself.

Ilarion, Sermon on Law and Grace

In **Divine Revelation** God reveals his very Self and makes his will known to people (compare Eph 1:9) so that they may become partakers of his divine nature (compare Eph 2:18; 2 Pet 1:4).

The **Covenant (Testament)** is an agreement between God and his people, initiated by the Lord himself, promising the people his protection and care. With the Incarnation of the Son of God, God enters into a new, eternal covenant with humankind.



Theme 2

Holy Tradition



The children of Prince Volodymyr the Great – a fresco in Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv



I have given them your word,... and I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them!

Jn 17:14, 17:26



Holy Tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming

it preserve this Word ... faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known.

Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* [The Word of God], 9.

Serhii: Father, there, in the corner, what kind of sarcophagus is that?

Father Andrii: This is the resting place of Prince Yaroslav the Wise, the son of Prince Volodymyr the Great. These two princes were the initiators and main builders of Saint Sophia's Cathedral. We call Saint Volodymyr an equal-to-the-apostles, because like Christ's apostles in the world, he was instrumental in making the Word of God grow in the hearts and consciousness of his people.

The prince gave up his sinful life and, having been made clean by the waters of Holy Baptism, became a member of the Christian Church in 988. Due to Saint Volodymyr, our ancestors also received baptism — the light of Christ's teaching has shone forth on the banks of the Dnipro River.

Serhii: And how did this teaching of Christ reach us?

Father Andrii: Christ commissioned his apostles to be witnesses of his teaching to the ends of the earth (compare Lk 24:47-48). They confirmed what had been from the beginning, what they had heard, what they had seen with their own eyes, and what their hands had touched. They told us all about it, so that we may have fellowship with them (compare 1 Jn 1:1-3). The holy apostles, having been taught by the Holy Spirit, passed on God's Revelation to their successors, the bishops of the Church. Through Apostolic Tradition, we too have been able to hear the Word of God and preserve it in the unity of our faith.

Martyn: Where can I get acquainted with this Tradition?

Father Andrii: In the teaching of the Church. First and foremost, the Church relies on Holy Scripture — the books written by divinely inspired people. It, too, relies on the teaching of the Holy Fathers of the Church,

who were preaching the Word of God and explaining it. Holy Tradition is revealed in the liturgical texts and the Symbols of Faith.



The Baptism of Rus-Ukraine



Christ is to be preached to all nations and all peoples, so that God's Revelation may thus reach the ends of the earth.

Christ – Our Pascha, 30



The sarcophagus of Prince Yaroslav the Wise in Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv

Chrystyna: And who brought the Gospel to our land?

Father Andrii: According to *The Tale of Bygone Years*, one of the first preachers of the Gospel of Christ in our lands was the apostle Andrew, a witness of Christ and a martyr for the faith. The preaching of Saints Cyril and Methodius (ninth century), the great apostles of the Slavic peoples, also reached our lands.

Clearly, Christian communities emerged in our land long before the baptism of Volodymyr. The Gospel of Christ was preached here long before the Baptism, and more and more people accepted it. After the Baptism of 988 monasteries and monastic communities began to appear in Kyivan Rus, and liturgical piety flourished. Following the example of the first Christian martyrs, the holy martyrs Borys and Hlib (eleventh century), Prince Mykhail of Chernihiv and his boyar Teodor (thirteenth century), and afterwards the holy martyrs Josaphat Kuntsevych (seventeenth century), Teodor Romzha, Mykolai Charnetskyi (twentieth century), and many, many other witnesses of the faith have been glorified in our land.

Holy Tradition is the preservation and teaching of the Word of God.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the apostles faithfully passed on the Gospel of Christ to all future generations through their sermons

and writings.

Holy Tradition helps the disciples of Christ, despite the diversity of their cultures, to maintain the unity of faith through which they become partakers of God's life and to avoid any misunderstanding of Holy Scripture.



Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

Mt 28:19-20

Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

1 Tim 1:14



As a wonderful fruit of Your saving sowing, O Lord, our land offers You all the saints who have shone in our land. O Most Merciful, through their prayers protect our people. ... Grant us, O God, that, through the prayers of Saint Andrew the Apostle, Christianity may flourish in our homeland for our joy and salvation, that, through the prayers of Cyril and Methodius, ... we may always have a good priesthood that would lead us to Christ; that, through the prayers of Saint Olha, our families may grow in righteousness; that, through the prayers of Saint Volodymyr, the leaders of our people may be endowed with generosity and justice; that, through the prayers of Saints Borys and Hlib, brotherly love and consensus may prevail among our people.

A Prayer to All Saints of Rus-Ukraine



The equals-of-the-apostles Volodymyr and Olha, Saint Clement Pope of Rome, the passion-bearers Borys and Hlib, the venerable Antonii and Teodosii of the Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery beneath the protecting veil of the Mother of God



Having enlightened your people with the faith of Christ and having been warmed by the love of God, you, O Volodymyr, together with your grandmother Olha, were glorified before God as a true apostle. Through you we also glorify Christ who is wonderful in the saints.

The Hymn of Light at Matins on the Feast on Saint Volodymyr



Of the dogmas and proclamations that are guarded in the Church, we hold some from the teaching of the Scriptures, and others we have received in mystery as the teachings of the Tradition of the apostles. Both hold the same power with respect to true religion. No one would deny these points, at least no one who has even a little experience of ecclesiastical institutions. For if one attempts to reject nonscriptural customs as insignificant, one would, unaware, lose the very vital parts of the Gospel, and even more, one would establish the proclamation merely in name.

Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*

Theme 3

The Word of God in Holy Scripture



The four evangelists — John, Matthew, Luke, and Mark

Each evangelist had his own life story and ministry. According to tradition, Matthew was a taxcollector who underwent conversion and became an apostle. Mark was a disciple of the apostle Peter. Luke was a doctor. John, a beloved disciple of Jesus, is called a “theologian” because he saw in Jesus Christ “the Word of God becoming flesh” (compare Jn 1:14). They are depicted like those who described the Divine Son of God in earthly words in church on the Royal Doors, separating the “heavenly” sanctuary from the “earthly” temple of the faithful, and also on the rays of the central dome — in those places where the “heavenly” (the dome) meets with the “earthly” (the nave).



Holy Scripture is the Word of God addressed to every human being. Therefore, it is relevant in every time and every place. The Holy Scriptures are a collection of books, written *under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit* by holy people, which the Church of Christ has received and preserves as the Word of God.

Christ – Our Pascha, 38

Marichka: There is something written there... It is difficult for me to determine because it is far too high. Father, who are those men depicted under the central dome? It seems that they are not only reading there but also writing something... And in what language? I cannot make sense of anything...

Fr. Andrii: In fact, they are not only reading but also writing things down. They are the evangelists. For example, in the upper left corner we see the image of John the Theologian, one of the twelve apostles of Christ. He records what he had heard from his Master and what he personally witnessed.

Today we can read with you what he and the other evangelists wrote in Holy Scripture. The text that is so difficult for you, Marichka, to make out is the first sentence from the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God...” (Jn 1:1).



The holy evangelist John. A mosaic in Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv

Dmytro: In my childhood, my mother read Bible stories for children to me. There were so many really vivid illustrations in it! Is the Bible also Holy Scripture?

Father Andrii: Yes, it is the same thing. The word “Bible” comes from the Greek meaning “books” of Holy Scripture. In fact, Holy Scripture is the Word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Church accepts Holy Scripture as an invaluable gift of God's love. God himself speaks from the pages of Holy Scripture to the human heart, urging humankind to approach him, to meet him. Holy Tradition and Holy Scripture are moving toward a common goal. Holy Tradition interprets the texts of Holy Scripture, while at the same time Holy Scripture facilitates in establishing the truthfulness of oral Tradition, expressed, especially, in the teaching of the Holy Fathers.

Serhii: I understand the Commandments, the prescriptions that I find there, but many passages of Holy Scripture seem contradictory to me.

Father Andrii: This is not surprising. Holy Scripture is the Word of God, that was expressed in the language of a person who was a child of his or her time and culture. It used literary genres contemporaneous to him or her, and it reflected in categories different from our own. As a result, we ourselves cannot always instantly understand what is truly contained in individual words and printed texts.

God has entrusted Holy Scripture, written with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to his Church so that she may carefully preserve and explain Holy Scripture to her faithful in accordance with the fullness of God's Revelation. A person always needs the assistance of the Holy Spirit to adequately understand the Word of God, and thus to match up the ways of his or her life's journey with this Word.



Holy Scripture is the Word of God Most High, one in the Trinity, spoken to us useless sinners, whom the Most High calls to the dignity of being his children and who receives us as his children. It is therefore an inexhaustible treasury of all heavenly blessings, a source of the light of heavenly, infallible truth, and of living water, flowing unto eternal life and the eternal salvation of the whole human race. And so, let us come to understand what medicine for the soul, what angelic nourishment, what strength for life, and what a most wonderful gift from heaven is every word of Holy Scripture.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, *The Profession of the Universal Faith*



So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

2 Thess 2:15

Martyn: I know that the Old and New Testaments are in Holy Scripture. Personally, I think that for a person today the New Testament is sufficient. After all, the Old Testament is not that easy to understand.

Father Andrii: In fact, the Old and New Testaments are one Word of God. The Old Testament prepares humankind for its encounter with Christ the Messiah and reveals to us God's great plan for humankind's salvation and the Creator's incomprehensible love for his creation. The Old Testament also contains many inspiring examples from the lives of righteous people, wise teachings and insightful prayers, as well as prototypes and prophecies, the meaning and fulfillment of which the New Testament reveals to us.

And already in it we have the encounter with Christ himself, the humble Teacher of Nazareth, the incarnate Word of God, who realizes the mystery of humankind's salvation. Both Testaments are very closely interconnected. The Old Testament helps to understand better the New Testament, whereas, without the New Testament one cannot fully comprehend the Old Testament.



All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

2 Tim 3:16-17

First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but holy men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 Pet 1:20-21



Make the pure light of your divine knowledge shine in our hearts, O loving Master. Open the eyes of our minds that we may understand the message of your Gospel. Instill in us the fear of your blessed commandments that we may subdue all carnal desires and follow a spiritual way of life, thinking and doing all that pleases you, for you, O Christ our God, are the enlightenment of our souls and bodies, and we give glory to you, together with your eternal Father and your most holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

The Prayer before the Reading of the Gospel at the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

Holy Scripture is the Word of God written down. Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition make up a single sacred deposit of God's Word.

The full Holy Scripture amounts to the Book of Books, at the heart of which remains Christ himself, the incarnate Word of God.

The author of Holy Scripture is God himself, who inspired the people he chose, the holy writers, to write about the things of God using human words.

The Old and New Testaments are the only Word of God: the Old Testament prepares the way for the New Testament, and the New Testament explains and complements the Old Testament.

The **Bible** in Greek means “books”; the collection of Books contained in Holy Scripture.

The **Canon** is the complete list of sacred books, determined on the basis of Apostolic Tradition. These Books are accepted by the Church as written with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and unmistakably convey the saving truths proclaimed by God himself. The Church regards as inspired the 47 Books of the Old Testament and the 27 Books of the New Testament that make up the Canon of Holy Scripture.

Theme 4

Faith Comes from What is Heard



The hierarchs Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nyssa — a mosaic in Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv



The Church, indeed, though disseminated throughout the world, received from the apostles and their disciples the true faith, carefully guarding it and preaching this truth, as if she possesses but one mouth.

Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*

Martyn: Father, but how can we be sure that Christ's teachings have come to us without any changes? After all, so much time has passed

since the apostles went out into the world to preach what they heard from the Saviour himself...

Father Andrii: With the help of the apostles who were guided by the Holy Spirit, the Word proclaimed by the Saviour more than two thousand years ago has been preserved intact and uncorrupted by human musings. As they taught with their words and with their righteous living the Holy Fathers of the Church, the witnesses of the Apostolic Tradition, helped their contemporaries to understand the revealed truths more deeply. The first of them were the disciples of the apostles themselves: Saints Clement, Pope of Rome, Ignatius the God-bearer, and Polycarp of Smyrna.

Among the great teachers of the faith and of righteousness we think of Saints Athanasius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, Leo the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory the Great, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and others.

The Church Fathers, inspired by the Holy Spirit, communicated the fullness of revealed truth received from the Saviour himself and transmitted by the apostles to all nations, so that all humankind may be found worthy of the gift of salvation.



So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

Rom 10:17

Daryna: Here on the mosaics I see images of several of those Fathers you have just mentioned. Tell me, Father, did they formulate the basic dogmas of our faith?

Father Andrii: Yes. The truths revealed by God in Holy Scripture and in Holy Tradition have become a precious treasure for the Church, the community of the faithful. The Christian Church preserves this sacred

deposit, keeps a close eye on its authenticity, and draws wisdom and inspiration from it, which it shares with all people of good will.

All of God's people in the Church — lay people and their pastors — preserve, confess, and put into practice the truths revealed by the Lord to humankind. In order to keep these truths safe, the Church clearly describes them using language accessible to the people of a particular time and culture. Such definitions of the truth constitute the Church's "rule of faith." We call them dogmas.

The conciliar thought of the Holy Fathers is inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Fathers began to define our faith, began to guarantee the compliance of the Church's faith with the words spoken by the Saviour himself.



The unbroken continuity of Tradition is realized in the liturgical life of the Church, and in the teachings of the holy Fathers, whose witness to the truth is based not on human recollections, but on a living and uninterrupted experience of the Holy Spirit. The constancy of this experience within the Christian community is the safeguard of our faithfulness to the apostles' teaching, to the heritage of the holy Fathers, and to the teaching of the Church, which strengthens our hope in the promise of the coming age. Faithfulness to Tradition is faithfulness to new life in Christ, which has been transmitted by the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and from them to the bishops, the presbyters, the deacons, and all the faithful.

Christ – Our Pascha, 35



Even today the Church has the same task — to preserve the truth unharmed and to preach the truth of salvation to people. The responsibility for the transmission of the faith rests with the bishops — the successors of the apostles. We call their everlasting, universal in distribution and unified among themselves teaching of the truths revealed by God and transmitted by the apostles — Church teaching.



Teachers of the Slavs Cyril and Methodius



Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...

Heb 12:1-2

Serhii: Father Andrii, why are there so many different traditions, rites, and Churches if the Fathers together were defining the same faith during the Ecumenical Councils?

Father Andrii: In Christ, the Gospel or Good News was communicated to all the people regardless of their historical and cultural background. Human culture — language, customs, the way of thinking and living — does not stand in the way with respect to the proper proclamation of the Gospel but becomes its invaluable tool. Thus, the single Tradition of the Word of God has been embodied in the great diversity of cultures, not by destroying them, but by ennobling them, filling them with life-giving meaning and Gospel values. In these cultures, over the centuries, distinctive theological, liturgical, and spiritual ways of transmitting God's Revelation have been formed. They have become a precious heritage of self-governing Churches and, in this way, of the entire Church of Christ.

Through the efforts of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the Gospel of Christ entered Slavic culture. Without a doubt, it was they and their disciples who translated the Gospel and liturgical texts into a language that people could understand. In this way, Holy Tradition became the leaven for the new Christian culture, in the midst of which our Church tradition was formed.

Daryna: And my grandmother taught me the basic truths of the faith when I was a small child!

Father Andrii: Faith is a gift of God and the fruit of our hearing the Word of God, but one must nurture it and grow in it, and this requires our effort. The path of faith begins with the Christian family. In it, parents not only teach their children the fundamental truths of the Gospel, but they themselves are called to actively testify to them in their lives.



Whoever listens to you listens to me.

Lk 10:16



A prayerful and virtuous life makes the Christian family the centre of God's presence in society. The Gospel permeates all dimensions of public life, heals the wounds inflicted by sin, and inspires the responsible increase of the common good.

Love for God and neighbour sanctifies and strengthens our love for our own nation, teaches us to be dedicated and devoted in building our homeland. This same love makes patriotism active and fruitful. With the help of the Church, our love for our homeland acquires its deeper, sacred meaning. The family, the nation, and the Church become important centres for the transmission of the faith through which God's grace accomplishes the salvation of a person and the entire human race

The Holy Fathers of the Church, enlightened and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, made the revealed truth available to their contemporaries. The Church relies on their teaching in her teaching.

The conciliar, in other words, the common, thought of the Fathers defines our faith, assuring the full conformity of what the Church believes with the words spoken by the Saviour himself.

The Good News of the Gospel — one in its message — became embodied in the diversity of human cultures.

The family, the nation, and the Church are the basic means of transmitting and spreading the faith through which God's grace accomplishes the salvation of a person and the salvation of the entire human race.



When the foremost blessed preachers of the Gospel dogmas and pious traditions of Christ received within themselves the enlightenment and divine radiance of the Holy Spirit, they declared the supernatural oracle openly to be their opinion inspired by God, in phraseology concise, while sublime in significance. Having received from on high the clear revelation of truths, they promulgated the faith taught by God.

Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the Council of Nicaea, Matins Stichira

A **dogma** is a definition of the faith accepted by the Fathers during the Ecumenical Councils.

Inculturation is the expression of the one Tradition within the diversity of local cultures and traditions.

A **self-governing Church** is a Christian Church embodied in the culture of a specific people.

Theme 5

Faith — Our Response to God



The Belief of the Apostle Thomas (Jn 20:24-31)

The icon depicts the encounter of the apostle Thomas with the risen Christ a week after Christ's Resurrection. The Church liturgically contemplates this event on Thomas Sunday. Christ asks the apostle Thomas to put his finger into his wounds as a result of the nails and into his pierced side. In response, the apostle places his hand into Christ's wounds. His belief is expressed in the words: "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20:28). Thomas is blessed, because by faith he touched God and saw the invisible God in the visible Teacher. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (Jn 20:29).

Marichka: For me personally, faith is always a challenge. Sometimes there are so many questions! Why is it so difficult for me to explain to myself what I believe in?

Father Andrii: These days a person is reluctant to recognize authorities other than his or her own. For this reason, it is sometimes difficult for them to accept the fact that faith is not only their personal decision, but, first and foremost, a gift from God. It is the Lord who begins the dialogue with humankind.

From the depths of the human heart comes forth his invitation to an exciting journey, to friendship with its Creator, which radically changes human life. The grace of God illumines the deepest dimensions of the human person. The Holy Spirit directs a person in the search for the truth and the true good.



So I believe, and am not ashamed, and so I confess before the people. And for this confession I will even lay down my life.

Ilarion, *The Confession of Faith*

Marichka: Father, does faith not restrict my freedom?

Father Andrii: Faith is a gift from God and requires making sense of it on a personal level. When people believe, they align their minds, their feelings, and their behaviour with the truth revealed by God. This obedience to God is the fruit of a deep and attentive obedience to the Word of God and gives people the courage to approach the Creator himself through obedience. The truths of faith, which people receive through cooperation with divine grace, enlighten their minds and promote human freedom as children of God.



The Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council during which the Symbol of Faith was adopted

Martyn: It is very difficult to reconcile faith with the scientific facts that I am taught at university...

Father Andrii: Truth revealed by God is not always and not immediately understood by the human mind. It cannot be understood relying only on recent experience. Instead, we comprehend it through the spiritual experience of faith. That is why Christ confirms his preached word by works, such as his miracles. These fruits are brought by those who throughout their lives bear witness to the authenticity of God's Revelation: the struggle of the saints, the courage of martyrs along with the perseverance of the confessors, the abundant fruits of prayer, and the activity of the faithful of the Church in the world.

Faith brings to a person a strong interior confidence, and at the same time it seeks ways to explain it using the mind in order to come to know and love the Lord God more and more. One of the great Fathers of the Church, Saint Augustine, described the relationship between faith and reason in the following words: "Understand so that you may believe. ... Believe so that you may understand."

There are no contradictions between faith and science. This is shown by both the development of theological interpretations of faith and the development of scientific knowledge. Faith, enlightened by divine grace, gives us the opportunity to look into a reality that human knowledge cannot attain. However, a careful study of the created world and the world of

human relations, based on scientific methods, also allows humankind to get closer to the Creator of all that exists to understand better the greatness of his plan. Science can promote the prayerful contemplation of the Wisdom of God.



Marichka: Did I understand correctly that scientific knowledge alone is not enough to know the truth, but that our faith must also be nurtured?

Father Andrii: Yes, for “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6). Indeed, faith is our response to his invitation to a new, full life. In fact, faith enables us to accept the gift of being the children of God, to become partakers of eternal happiness in the arms of a loving Father. Christ himself taught his disciples: “The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:16). Therefore, the Saviour makes it clear that he is the only — “way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6).

The Lord calls a person to the fullness of life and does not force him or her in the same breath. Mature faith is the result of a free decision of a responsible person. God also freely and lovingly calls humankind to salvation. And this vocation rules out any coercion and pressure.



The source of Christian life is faith in the risen Christ. ...

Thus, for almost two thousand years, the Church has unceasingly witnessed and preached the Resurrection of Christ in order that people may believe and be saved: “How are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ... So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:14,17).

Christ – Our Pascha, 1-2



The Miraculous Catch of Fish (Lk 5:1-11)

Martyn: So can faith, if I understand this correctly, change my life?

Father Andrii: A person, giving his or her free response, cooperates with God’s plan of salvation, opening new possibilities for him or her. A person is called to grow continually in faith and, with their confident witnessing, not become tired of bearing good fruits.

As a result, faith is already here, in our life on earth, it becomes the beginning of eternal life for humankind. Despite all possible trials, we are called to be faithful witnesses of Christ. For a world wounded by sin and weary with despair and hopelessness, this kind of witnessing to the faith is especially important.

Our faith inspires us to be the “light of the world” and the “salt of the earth” (compare Mt 5:13-14). The faith of a young person — this is a great

treasure for the whole Church. For our people, faith is an inexhaustible source of spiritual integrity.

A person's faith is a gift from God.

Our faith is born of the Church's faith and nourished by it.



Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

Jn 14:1

The **Symbol of Faith** is a printed text where the saving truths of our Christian faith are found, and each statement therein is a symbol of divine reality, in which we find ourselves through faith.

The **Niceno-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith** is the fruit of the first two Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381). This Symbol of Faith is common to all the Churches of the East and West.

The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfilment of the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.



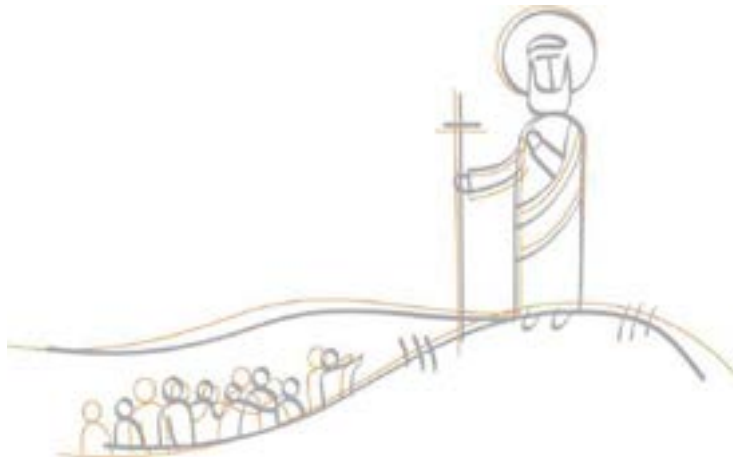
Although we did not see you with our own eyes, when you, O Christ, rose from the tomb as God, but we believe in this with our whole heart and magnify you in hymns.

Matins of Thomas Sunday, Canon, Ode 9



Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

Rom 5:1-2



Theme 6

God — Father Almighty



Christ the Pantocrator (the Almighty) – a mosaic in Saint Sophia’s Cathedral, Kyiv

Pantocrator translated from the Greek means Almighty. He is usually depicted in a church’s central dome to symbolize heaven. Christ is represented as the Creator and Almighty of the whole universe and God who is all-embracing and loving. His right hand as it blesses is the creative hand of God, from which the world arose, which sustains it in existence, and to which all beings proceed with regard to the purpose and fullness of their being. In his left hand, Christ holds a closed book. The symbolism of a closed book is the incomprehensibility of God’s judgments and his Providence. We do not know what the “ways of the Lord” are (compare Rom 11:33), but we believe that God through salvation will complete both the history of humankind and the personal history of each human being.



We have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

1 Jn 4:16

Chrystyna: Faith would always help me personally. When my mother and I were abandoned all by ourselves, she would often repeat to me, “We are not alone. The Lord does love us!”

Father Andrii: And she was not mistaken. The image of God in Holy Scripture is the image of a loving father. The whole history of a chosen people is the story of God’s love, God’s generosity and faithfulness to this people. Old Testament prophets pay close attention to the rebellious nature and unfaithfulness of God’s people, who often deviate from following the Commandments and “wander” with pagan idols.

Israel often betrays, but God always remains faithful. The Lord fights for his people, he leads them out of slavery, he feeds them, he protects them from their enemies, he does not abandon them in the wilderness, he brings them into the Promised Land, and he patiently looks for their conversion and accepts their repentance. God always remains faithful to his covenant, because true love will never betray.

And in the New Testament, the evangelist John testifies that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). This means that God the Father in love begets the Son and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. With that same love the Most Holy Spirit — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — creates everything that exists. Human beings, therefore, are the image, the icon of God-Love. Therefore, when human beings love in a committed and selfless way, they ascend to their divine Prototype and truly become themselves.



The Father is our hope, the Son – our refuge, the Holy Spirit – our protection. O Holy Trinity, our God, glory to you. Praise of the Most Holy Trinity



In our liturgical and personal prayers, through the constant invocation and glorification of the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we simultaneously express our faith and communion with the Most Holy Trinity.

Christ – Our Pascha, 73



Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

Is 43:1-3

Dmytro: It has always been difficult for me to understand how three Persons can be one God...

Father Andrii: This is the mystery of faith, incomprehensible to the human mind, but open to the pure heart (compare Mt 5:8). The Father, the Source of God's love, has no beginning, but is himself the Beginning for the other Persons — the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father eternally begets the Son and is the Source of the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Father is the one and only Beginning, and therefore the Most Holy Trinity is one God.

The Son, uncreated but eternally born of the Father, the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15), reveals the Father and has the same dignity as the Father, and therefore he is God. The incarnate Son of God reveals to humankind the Holy Spirit, the third Divine Person.

The Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father. Through the Son's mission of salvation in human history and after his ascension into heaven, God in the Holy Spirit is “everywhere present and fills all things,” gives human love divine power and directs humankind towards the kingdom of heaven.

The Holy Trinity is a communion of Persons, the unceasing and unconditional gift of self, the fullness of love, from which all created things derive their existence. From the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit the love of God sustains all creation: it calls into existence, it protects, it heals, it gives life, it inspires, it enlightens, it sanctifies, it restores, it tirelessly creates a new earth and a new person — a child of God, a partaker of divine life, and an heir of the kingdom of God's love.

Martyn: So, “Trinity” is the name for God?

Father Andrii: Yes, the Most Holy Trinity is one of the names by which we address God. By revealing himself to humankind, God reveals his name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The name points us to a specific Person and allows us to know God better, to have a close relationship with him. In fact, to call someone by their name means to invite them to dialogue, to open oneself to the presence of another, to respond to this presence.

When Moses asked God what his name is, the Lord answered: “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex 3:13-15). By calling himself by this name, God makes clear that it is a mystery, unreachable in its fullness by the human mind, which is incapable of reaching the beginnings of being lost in God's creative freedom. At the same time, in revealing his name to Moses, God through him invites all the people of Israel into relationship with him.

We find other names of God in Holy Scripture too. In addition to the Source of being itself — “I am,” the Lord manifests himself as God the Merciful One, the Just One, the Holy One, as Wisdom, the Way, the Life, the Truth, Love. All these names reveal to us important features of his divine nature. We see God ready to forgive and embrace people after their repentance. We see the Creator whose holiness surpasses any human understanding and is therefore always greater than humankind can imagine.



A guardian angel

At the same time — as Wisdom — the Lord is present in the very core of human life and in interpersonal and social relations. In the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Word of God, God shows human beings the way to truth, to the fullness of life in the Kingdom of heaven.

Our God is the Lord of all human history. Each of the revealed names of God helps us to know our Creator better and deeper, to understand his plan of salvation for us and the whole world.



The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

2 Cor 13:13

Chrystyna: It is so important for a person to remember that he or she is not alone in the world, that there is always someone nearby who loves him or her, who takes care of him or her...

Father Andrii: God declares himself to be the “One who is,” and, therefore, the One who is always and everywhere present. Having created the world, the Lord does not abandon his creation; he surrounds the whole world and the entire destiny of humankind with his gracious presence. Every day the Creator directs all creation to ever greater integrity and to the fullness of perfection.

This is exactly why God works tirelessly in human history. This divine presence, concrete and direct, accompanying creation until it comprehends the fullness of its existence, is called Divine Providence.

Jesus Christ teaches us to trust Providence — the Creator’s superabundant care for his creation, not to be worried and not to be distracted, but to be open with a sincere heart and trusting fully in God’s saving will. God is always nearby. Our trust in him allows him to promote our spiritual growth and through us to change the world for the better.



When I first know the One I am also illumined from all sides by the Three; when I first distinguish the Three I am also carried back to the One. When I picture One of the Three I consider This the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part has escaped me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that One so as to grant something greater to the rest.

Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 40, On Holy Baptism*



And grant that with one voice and one heart we may glorify and sing the praises of your most honoured and magnificent name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever.

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, Anaphora

Trinity Most Holy, have mercy on us. Cleanse us of our sin, O Master. Pardon our transgressions, O Master. Look upon our weaknesses and heal them, O Holy One, for the sake of your name.

Prayer to the Most Holy Trinity

God reveals himself to humankind as one God in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is at the heart of the Christian faith and Christian life.

Coming from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, God's love and power sustain all creation.

God reveals himself to humankind through the revelation of his name, so that humankind may know him better and enter into communion with him.

God is always actively and directly present in the world, directing everything by his Providence to the fullness of being.

Divine Providence is the plan of God's presence in the history of humankind, which leads each individual and the whole human community to their final end in God.

Theme 7

God — Maker of Heaven and Earth



The creation of the world (Gen 1:1-31)



The initial cause of [their] existence (the Father), the Maker (the Son), the Perfecter (the Holy Spirit).

Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*



In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light... God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Gen 1:1-3, 31

Martyn: Father Andrii, does our faith in God the Maker and the Almighty not contradict modern scientific theories on the origin of the universe?

Father Andrii: According to Divine Revelation, God is the Maker: “All things came into being through him” (Jn 1:3). Scientific hypotheses themselves, theories, versions of the origin of the universe do not contradict faith, but they are inadequate. By faith we see the connection between the universe and its Maker. It is based on this very connection that we call the world a creation. Our faith enables us to see everything that exists as the fruit of the Maker’s almighty love and wisdom.

Serhii: God created “heaven and earth.” How am I to understand this? Is “heaven” like the cosmos and “earth” like our planet?

Father Andrii: The expression “heaven and earth” has a broader meaning than the frequently used words of “universe” and “nature.” In the Symbol of Faith, we acknowledge that God is the Maker of “all that is seen and unseen.” Along these lines we speak of the physical and spiritual dimension of created reality. We call heaven the spiritual dimension of creation, where the invisible angelic world likewise belongs.

Marichka: How exactly did God create the world?

Father Andrii: The Book of Genesis speaks about it in this way: “And God said, ‘Let there be...’” (Gen 1). God pronounced the Word, which, according to the evangelist John, “was with God, and [the Word] was God”

(compare Jn 1:1), and this Word is his Son. The Son of God put into the foundation of all that came into being the original plan of the Father. God created all this absolutely and willingly, and nothing has stood in the way of freely carrying out God's plan. It is in this sense that the Holy Fathers speak of creation out of nothing.

Serhii: In Holy Scripture it speaks of six days of creation. And scientists claim that the formation of our world took billions of years. How can this be compatible?

Fr. Andrii: Six days of creation should not be taken literally. These words are used in the Epistle of the apostle Peter: "With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day" (2 Pet 3:8). God creates time to show the goodness of the created world through him. Creation that is from the "hands" of a good God is also good.

Having given a beginning to everything, God did not become exhausted as the Maker. He continues to bring order to all creation. And so, we profess him as the Almighty, who by the Holy Spirit gives life to the universe and leads it to fullness of being.

The revelation of God as the Maker, who gives a beginning to creation and to the life of created beings, and as the Almighty, who sustains creation in its being, means that for each of us the beginning, the "origin," is not creation, but the Maker himself, not nature, but the Person, not matter, but the Spirit.



Great are you, O Lord, and wondrous are your works, and no word is adequate to sing the praise of your wonders. For by your own will you brought all things out of nothingness into being, you hold creation together by your might, and by your Providence you direct the world. You composed creation from four elements; with four seasons you crowned the cycle of the year. All the spiritual powers tremble before you. The sun sings your praise, the moon glorifies you. The stars entreat you, the light obeys you. The deeps tremble before you, the springs are your servants. You stretched out

the heavens like a tent. You spread out the earth on the waters, you walled in the sea with sand. You poured out the air for breathing. Angelic powers minister to you, the choirs of archangels worship you... For you are God, the One who is, uncircumscribed, without beginning....

The Order for the Great Sanctification of Water



God is the Creator. This means that God not only created the world, but that he is always present in his creation, and that he is always creating. Hence, creation is a sign and expression of God's creative love. Through human beings, creation is called to respond to love with love, and to long for God as God longs for them.

Christ – Our Pascha, 106

Martyn: It is difficult to understand why the world was created for God who is eternal.

Father Andrii: Divine Revelation shows the world in which we live as being a generous gift from God. In creation, God reveals himself to us as a loving Father who calls his creation to participate in his perfect being. The beauty and orderliness of the universe testify to God's immeasurable wisdom and love.

Contemplating nature through the eyes of faith provides an opportunity to recognize the traces of God's wisdom and love both in the infinite nature of the universe and in the complex structure of the atom. And the crown of God's creation is humankind, whom God, through his Son — the incarnate Word of God — calls to the fullness of life.

Faith in the Maker allows us to know and understand all reality more deeply.

God creates a good and ordered world and calls it to being “out of nothing.”

Our world is a manifestation of God's wisdom and love.

The creating process is the work of the Most Holy Trinity.

The reality created in Christ is renewed and progresses to the fullness of God's plan.

The **creating process** is bringing the whole visible and invisible world out of nothingness into being.



Theme 8

Angels



An archangel — a mosaic in Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv



Angels exist by the will of the Father, they are brought into being by the energy of the Son, and they are perfected by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*



And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and

there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Rev 12:7-9

Daryna: Father, you were mentioning the creation of the invisible angelic world. What is this all about?

Father Andrii: The Lord reveals to us that the heavenly, invisible world he created is also full of life. In Holy Scripture, “residents” of the invisible world are called angels. They are called to the unending glorification of God. In the vision of the prophet Isaiah, angels contemplate God and glorify him as they sing, “Holy, holy, holy.” From Holy Tradition we know of the “nine choirs of angels” which glorify the Most Holy Trinity by creating a heavenly harmony composed of nine voices.

From Holy Scripture we learn the names of different choirs of angels. The Book of Genesis mentions one cherub with a flaming sword that God placed at the entrance to Paradise (compare Gen 3:24). The prophet Isaiah sees the seraphim above the heavenly throne (compare Isa 6:2).





As commanders of the angelic ranks, O all-radiant Michael, and you, O Gabriel, as the true herald of the divine incarnation: Preserve all who praise you, O glorious ones.

Matins, Canon of Monday, Tone 5, Ode 9

The apostle Paul names even other angelic ranks: “for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers” (Col 1:16).

Chrystyna: If God created angels, then where do evil spirits come from?

Father Andrii: As spiritual beings, angels are called to become like God. The fulfillment of this vocation by the angels creates a heavenly hierarchy — different degrees of drawing closer to God. This vocation presupposes the angels’ freely given consent. For this reason, the invisible world is not some world of perfection pre-arranged by God, where everything is already determined without the consent of spiritual beings. Just the opposite. As persons, angels are called to be strengthened in goodness and, like a mirror, to reflect the light of God’s glory.

However, not all angels “unanimously” chose to serve God. According to Christ: “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning” (Lk 10:18). Christ makes reference to the angel who put himself in place of God using the name “Satan” (from the Hebrew meaning “adversary”). Some of the angels followed his example. This is how the light-bearing angels became the bearers of darkness; they became evil, wicked spirits. And because of the division between the angels (in Greek “διαβολω” — I divide), they call Satan the Devil.

The angels, faithful to God, formed a powerful “heavenly army” that defeated the angels turned theomachists. Satan was defeated: he fell away from God, he lost heaven and found himself in hell or Hades (from the

Greek “Hades” — a place of darkness). Like Satan, the other fallen angels also rejected God, they lost the goodness of God’s creation and fell into the “outer darkness” away from the light of God (Mt 25:30).

Serhii: I have heard that angels are called spirits in the divine service. Whom do they serve?

Father Andrii: In the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob had a dream in which he saw a ladder stretching from heaven to earth, with God’s angels descending and ascending on it (compare Gen 28:12-17). This dream indicates that invisible angels are among us in the visible world. In his mercy, God has given each of us a guardian angel sent to serve for the sake of our salvation.



The existence of the invisible angelic realm attests to the wealth and diversity of the world created by God.

Christ— Our Pascha, 115

Often positive intentions and good thoughts do not emerge in us spontaneously, they do not emerge from the subconscious, but are a “suggestion” of our guardian angel. He contemplates in the Lord the way of our salvation and suggests those saving decisions that are sometimes difficult for us to make ourselves. This “radiant angel” helps us not to succumb to the temptations of the “spiritual forces of evil.”



Jacob's Ladder (Gen 28:12-17)

Angels differ in their degree of drawing close to God, which they comprehend through personal cooperation with God's glory.

Angels who refused to cooperate with God fell away from him and lost heaven.

Angels who remain faithful to God are in harmony with their Creator.

Each of us has a guardian angel who instructs us in the interest of what is good.



The Nine Ranks of Angels

Angels (translated from Greek, messengers-heralds) — spiritual beings created by God to joyfully glorify the Creator and transmit his will to creation.

The existence of angels is a great mystery, about which Holy Scripture says very little. However, from some biblical texts we learn that angelic spirits are divided into different types and degrees of closeness to God. The apostle Paul speaks about this clearly, albeit briefly (Col 1:16), and in various places in the Old Testament we come across the various heavenly ranks being mentioned — cherubim, seraphim, thrones, archangels, and angels (Gen 3:24; Tob 12:15; Isa 6:2; Ezek 1:4-28; Dan 7:9). Archangels and angels were appearing in the form of people, the reason they are depicted this way in Christian art. The most common are the images of two archangels — Michael and Gabriel, whose numerous appearances are described in Holy Scripture.

Theme 9

Humankind Created in the Image and Likeness of God: Male and Female



The creation of humankind



In what then does the greatness of a person lie? Not in his or her likeness to the created world, but in his or her being in the image of the nature of the Creator.

Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Humankind*

Marichka: Father, you spoke of the battle between the angels. However, we humans often experience battles from within. We worry about who we are, we also worry about our prospective dreams and plans. Sometimes we think highly of ourselves, and other times we think the

opposite. We do care what people think of us, and we have concerns if they judge us unfairly. But how does God judge us?

Father Andrii: God sees us as his children, so we are good in his eyes. To God, we are “his people,” he always wishes us well. At a certain point in history (“on the sixth day”), God creates man from the “clay” (matter) of the earth, as witnessed by the name of man “Adam” which means “taken from the earth.” By his or her body a person is related to nature. God “breathes” his life into this body. And it is precisely because of the Spirit being bestowed on humankind, of the inseparable union of the physical and the spiritual that humankind appears in history. God creates humankind in his image and according to his likeness.

Dmytro: And how is one to understand the image of God in humankind?

Father Andrii: If all living creatures of every kind were brought forth, then only humankind is in the image of God, infinitely raising it above all creation. From God’s perspective, a human being is not only an individual representative of the homo sapiens species but also a unique person.



The creation of Adam (Gen 2:7)



Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

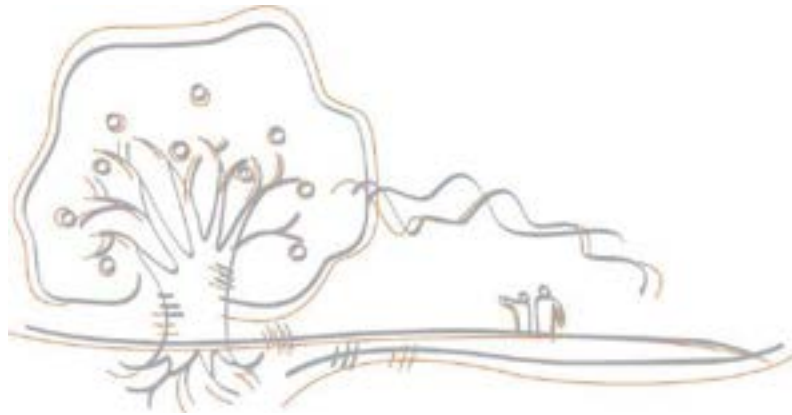
Gen 1:26-27

Dmytro: What, then, is the likeness of God?

Father Andrii: If the image of God is what we are, then the likeness of God is what we are called to be. That is why the vocation of every person is to become like God in order to become “divine by grace” (to achieve divinization). To achieve divinization is to cooperate with God’s grace, for which there are no limits; it is to have eternal life and to become a partaker in God’s nature. In order to become like God, a person needs to respond freely to God’s call.

In the Book of Genesis, human freedom is revealed in the image of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Beginning with Adam, all human beings appear in life before their “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” in other words, before the fundamental choice of living with God or existing without God. Human beings are personally responsible for the consequences of this choice.

God expressed this truth in the commandment: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen 2:16-17). To choose God means to achieve eternal life in him (the image of the tree of life). To renounce God means to die, as in, to lose eternal life.



Serhii: If Adam is formed from the earth, then why is Eve taken from the rib of Adam?

Father Andrii: The image of God is concerned with a human being not only as a separate individual. In his plan, God, who is the Most Holy Trinity — the communion of Persons, sees a human being also as the communion of male and female. Therefore, in the image of the communion of the Most Holy Trinity “so God created humankind ... male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27).

God reveals the connection between and the complementarity of male and female in the image of the creation of a female from the rib of Adam. That is why a woman is the “bone of his bones.” This connection is manifested in a loving union: “and the two shall become one flesh” (Mt 19:5). This communion in the love of Adam and Eve is the image of the communion of Persons in the Most Holy Trinity.



The expulsion from Paradise (Gen 3:21-24)

Chrystyna: And why do we call humankind the culmination of creation?

Father Andrii: Human beings are the culmination of creation, in so far as the Lord made them stewards of creation: to responsibly preserve and transform it. Humankind's efforts to be stewards of creation is the realization of their call to be like God. In this way, the Lord calls human beings to be stewards of creation and co-creators of Paradise on earth: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28).



Created good, humankind was supposed to achieve gradually perfection... To grow into the second Adam — Christ — is to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit to the point of our permanent abiding in it.

Christ— Our Pascha, 126



Dmytro: Why did Adam and Eve lose Paradise?

Father Andrii: Human freedom possesses the opportunities to attain goodness and the risks of not attaining it equally. God's Commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil contains an early warning of these risks. By emphasizing human responsibility, God in no way restricts people's freedom. On the contrary, God helps people to nurture this freedom by working with them, so that, by choosing what is good, people would grow to live in goodness.

The risks, which freedom brings for humankind, are the temptation to put oneself in the place of God, to believe in one's own omnipotence. This gives rise to the worship of the human person, as well as to social utopias. In fact, this is delusion and self-deception that make it impossible for a person to achieve the likeness of God and the realization of positive opportunities. In the story of Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise Holy Scripture describes the unfortunate choice of our first parents to "become like God", but without God.



We can truly say that the accurate likeness of the divine consists in our soul's imitation of the superior Nature.

Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection, A Dialogue with his sister Macrina*

Humankind is the culmination of creation.

As an individual, a human being is the bearer of God's image.

At the same time, human beings are called in life to become like God through their free choice of God.

A person realizes his or her being like God in community with others and by being stewards of creation.

If a person acts without God, he or she will not fulfill his or her vocation.



I am an image of your ineffable glory ... Lead me back again to your likeness that I may be transformed with that ancient beauty.

Troparion for Repose during the Order of Burial

Theme 10

Jesus Christ – One of the Most Holy Trinity, the Image of the Invisible God



Old Testament Trinity



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him.

Jn 1:1-3

Martyn: Father, we profess God the Father to be Almighty. But Christ the Almighty is depicted in the dome. How is one to reconcile this?

Father Andrii: Jesus Christ himself kept emphasizing that he is the Son of God, in whom God the Father without beginning is revealed: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). The evangelist John also testifies to this: “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known” (Jn 1:18). So, as we contemplate the incarnate Son, we see the Father.

Dmytro: I have a hard time understanding this...

Fr. Andrii: It is why we receive this mystery with faith. Due to his faith, the apostle Thomas saw in Christ someone greater than just a lawgiver as he cried out to him: “My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28). The Church professes this faith in the Son of God expressed by the following words: “I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God.” By faith we experience him in the personal uniqueness of the Son of God, one of the Most Holy Trinity. This Son of God is unique and the one and only, that is to say, “the Only-begotten.”

Jesus Christ is the Son of God because he is the Son of the Father, and the relationship between the Son and the Father is one of love: “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). This love is the interconnected entry of Persons: “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (Jn 14:10).

The Father gives himself in love to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. We profess this gift of love by the Father as the begetting of the Son from the Father “before all ages” and the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father. The Church professes the begetting of the Son from the “womb” of the Father (compare John 1:18) in this manner: “Light from Light, true God from true God.”

The fact that the Son of God is begotten of the Father means that he is “not made.” At the same time this does not mean that he is begotten after the Father or that he is “younger” than the Father. The one true God is not a hermit, all alone, but a living communion of Persons in love.



The Father is the invisible of the Son, but the Son — the visible of the Father.

Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*



The exact Image of the Father and the imprint of his Being takes the form of a servant. Coming forth from an immaculate Mother, he underwent no change. He remained what he was — true God, and he takes up what he was not, becoming human in his love for humankind.

Vespers for Christ's Nativity, Stichira at "O Lord, I have cried"



The Church professes the Son to be one in being with the Father, emphasizing the equality of Persons within the Most Holy Trinity, and the unity of God's nature. Therefore, he [the Son] is not lower than the Father. He co-exists with him eternally and is equal to him in all things.

Christ— Our Pascha, 90

In his coming, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, revealed the Father.

At the same time, Jesus' being God's Son reflects equality with the Father in terms of divine nature.

Alongside the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Son of God is one of the Most Holy Trinity. He is begotten of the Father (the Only-begotten Son), and therefore not made (he does not belong to creation) and is true God.



Theme 11

The Incarnation of the Son of God



The Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God (Lk 1:26-28) — mosaic in Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv



Heaven and earth have been made one today, now that Christ is born. Today God has come upon the earth, and humanity gone up to heaven... When he saw that the one in his image and likeness had fallen away through transgression, Jesus bowed the heavens and came down and made his

dwelling in a virgin womb without change, that in it he might refashion corrupted Adam.

Lydia Stichiras at the Vigil for the Nativity of Christ



Today the Bountiful One impoverished himself for our salvation ... Today we received a gift for which we did not ask ... Today the heavenly doors were opened to our prayers ... Today the divinity put on humanity in order for humanity to be adorned with divinity.

Isaac the Syrian, *Homily on the Nativity*

Serhii: Why did God have to become human? After all, he saved us with a single word...

Father Andrii: God's love for creation was not limited to the creation of the world and of humankind — God himself became human: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3:16). These words mean that the Father's love for the Son were revealed as the Father's gift of his Son to the world: "The Word became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1:14). "The One who is" enters time and space. According to Cyril of Alexandria, God, remaining what he was (God), becomes what he was not (human). The One without beginning made a beginning for himself, the One whom nothing can contain is contained in a mother's womb.

The Son of God's conceiving takes place "by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary." The Lord calls her to divine motherhood, and she freely gives her consent to God: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). Then the Holy Spirit came upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowed her (compare Lk 1:35), and in her womb the Most Holy Child was conceived.

The Virgin Mary, having given birth to the Son of God, became the God-bearing One and the Mother of God, while remaining a Virgin who "did not know a man." The Church pays homage to the mysteries of divine motherhood and being "ever-virgin" that were fulfilled in the person of the humble Mary of Nazareth. For this reason we pray: "Rejoice, Mother of

God, Virgin Mary...”. The Lord divinizes her, making her “more honourable than the cherubim and by far more glorious than the seraphim.”

And the Lord divinized not only Mary. According to the Holy Fathers, “God became human so that humans may become divine.” In his incarnation, the Son of God not only “without division and confusion” united himself to humankind, but also “without division and confusion” united humankind to himself. When Christ took human flesh, human nature was divinized. At the same time, the Son of God, having become human, freely accepted all the limitations and weaknesses of human nature: hunger, thirst, sleep, suffering and death, becoming like us in everything except sin.

The proclamation of the Messiah’s coming ended with the conceiving of the Son of God in Mary’s womb with her freely given consent. God addresses her through the archangel Gabriel. Mary holds a yarn in her hands, which reminds us that she was chosen to weave the purple curtain for the Temple in Jerusalem (the Protoevangelium of James). According to theological tradition, this yarn became the symbol for the Incarnation, because the formation of a baby’s flesh in the womb can be compared to “spinning.” The colour of the thread symbolizes the royal and divine origin of the Child. This curtain, which used to separate the Holy of Holies, was torn in two when Jesus died on the Cross (Mt 27:51), and we were presented with a way of approaching God. Through the body of Emmanuel (in Hebrew, “God is with us”; compare Heb 10:19-20), “woven” in the womb of Mary, the gap between humankind and the unapproachable God was bridged.



In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from ... Galilee ... to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there [in Bethlehem], the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Lk 2:1-8

Daryna: If the Son of God “became human, so that humans may become divine,” why do we speak of our salvation?

Father Andrii: An insurmountable obstacle emerged on the way for humankind to become like God — the fall into sin of Adam and Eve. The result was the mortality of human beings (compare Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23). That is how a necessity emerged in our salvation to be freed from sin and death. The Book of Genesis shows how God wants to protect human beings from the danger of sin by giving them the following Commandment: “Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Gen 2:17).

The same danger is personified by the serpent, the tempter, which encourages humankind to break any Commandment. When human beings succumb to temptation and sin, God does not forsake them but promises that the Child born of a woman will strike the serpent’s head (compare Gen 3:15). The crushed head of the serpent is the image of sin that has been abolished.

Throughout the Old Testament, God prepares humankind to receive salvation. He calls his people — Israel, out of which, according to the prophets, will come the Messiah, who will bring about salvation. This Messiah will be of the line of King David. God will confirm his being sent with numerous signs: the blind shall receive their sight, the deaf shall hear, the dead will be raised (compare Isa 29:18; Lk 7:22).

And so, when the “fullness of time,” indicated by the prophets, had come, God sent his Son, “born of a woman” (Gal 4:4). The Virgin Mary gave birth to a Son, giving him the name Jesus, which means “God saves” (compare Lk 2:21).

Christ’s Nativity became such a significant event that, as a result, people subsequently began to record their chronology from it. In fact, a truly new era had dawned — the era of salvation. Maturing “in years and in divine favour,” Jesus Christ, now an adult man, revealed himself at the Jordan to the whole world. Then the voice of the Father came from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descended on God’s Son in the form of a dove (compare Lk 3:21-22). When God’s Son came to humankind, God “gave him the name that is above every name” (Phil 2:9), for there is no other name under heaven by which we would have been saved (compare Acts 4:12).



The Nativity of Christ (Lk 2:8-21)



In our Church's tradition, the Eve of the Nativity feast, also called Holy Eve (in Ukrainian, *Sviat Vechir*), is honoured with particular solemnity. Every home becomes a *Bethlehem of the family*: the table symbolizes the manger. Straw is placed under the tablecloth, and upon the tablecloth are placed the prosphora (Communion bread), a symbol of the Child Jesus. A lit candle is placed next to the prosphora to symbolize the star of Bethlehem. With a meatless supper, the family gathers around the table to prayerfully honour the incarnate Son of God. Christmas carols are sung by the faithful. In hospitality, homes open their doors to everyone who celebrates the Nativity of Christ. The high point of the celebration of the Nativity feast is the solemn divine service, for which all parishioners gather. The Eucharistic Supper at the Divine Liturgy crowns the family supper.

Christ— Our Pascha, 196

The Incarnation occurs from the Father's love for humankind, through the Son obeying the Father, by the descent of the Holy

Spirit upon Mary of Nazareth.

With her “Yes” Mary accepts God’s will and becomes the Mother of God, while remaining a Virgin. God divinizes her first from among the human race.

Having become human, the Son of God freely accepted the limitations and mortality of human nature. Through this acceptance of human nature and its union without division with the nature of God, every human being can become “divine by grace in Christ” and be saved from Adam’s sinful inheritance.



The Word [of God] became human so that we may become divine.

Athanasius the Great, *On the Incarnation of the Word*

The Word became flesh and is made partaker of blood and flesh precisely like us.

Cyril of Alexandria, *The Anathematisms*

Theme 12

Proclaiming God's Kingdom (The Words and Works of Jesus Christ)



The parable of the sower (Lk 8:4-15)



Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

Mt 4:17



The kingdom of God is personified in Jesus Christ. One becomes a participant of the kingdom through faith in Christ and by holy Baptism. ... We were created for the kingdom of God.

Christ— Our Pascha, 203

Chrystyna: Father, how did Christ begin his mission?

Father Andrii: Christ lived with Mary and Joseph in Nazareth and was obedient to them. And at thirty years old he received baptism from John the Baptist. From then on, he went out to preach in public, announcing that the kingdom of God is approaching and confirming his words with miracles.

Christ began to speak the Word, which became a revelation to his audience: “Never has anyone spoken like this like this Man!” (Jn 7:46). Christ reveals the commandments of the kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount (compare Mt 5:1-12). In it, the Son of God speaks to the human heart with the Word to, as if by way of a double-edged sword, cut off everything unclean: “For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander” (Mt 15:19).

With that in mind, Christ reinforces the Commandment of the Law of Moses “You shall not kill” with the words: “Do not be angry with your brother or sister,” and the Commandment “You shall not permit a stranger to defile your marriage bed” adding — “You shall not look with lust” (compare Mt 5). Christ perfects the Old Testament Commandment of love: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you’ (Mt 5:43-44); ‘If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also’” (Mt 5:39).

This is something completely new, not the righteousness from the Old Testament. To inherit the kingdom, the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees based on the letter of the Law is not enough. The fullness of righteousness is the righteousness of Christ, which is built on love. Therefore, the laws of the Kingdom are radically different from the laws of this world. Christ proclaims the Good News that “the kingdom of God has come near,” and calls upon the people to open their hearts to repentance.



The Tree of Jesse

The incarnate Son of God also became the Son of Man. His human “roots” are attested to in the genealogy of Jesse, the father of King David. The prophet Isaiah announces Jesse and his descendant Christ: “A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isa 11:1). Jesse, who lay fast asleep, is depicted at the bottom of the iconostasis, and Christ, foretold by the prophet, is depicted on the top of the iconostasis.

Martyn: If the laws of the Kingdom differ from the laws of our lives, then how do we understand the Kingdom?

Father Andrii: This is not easy. As such, Christ teaches about the mystery of the Kingdom in various parables. In Christ’s words, human speech is the bearer of God’s Word, just as a grain is a bearer of life and from the smallest seed a huge tree can grow. In the same way, we grow in our understanding of the kingdom of God. Christ tells a wonderful parable about this in which he compares himself to a sower, the Word of God to a grain, and the human heart to sowing (see Mt 13:1-9). As the grain needs to be sown, so the Word needs to be preached. Only in this imperceptible way does the kingdom of God grow within us.



The Saviour, grace and truth, has appeared in the streams of the Jordan and enlightened those who were asleep in the dark and shadow, for the Light that no one can approach has come and is revealed.

Matins on the Theophany of our Lord, Hymn of Light

Serhii: We have heard many beautiful words in our lives, not supported by works.

Father Andrii: The power of the Word of God was revealed in the works of Jesus. His Word kept healing diseases, soothing the elements of nature, freeing from demonic possession, and even raising the dead. When Christ was asked if he really was the Messiah sent by God, he answered in the words of the prophet Isaiah: “The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them” (Mt 11:5; see Is 29:18). It is these very works, in line with prophecy, that Christ, the Messiah, needed to do.

Christ’s miracles are not a purely medical therapy, just as the Messiah is not only a universal healer who frees from all physical and mental illnesses. The healing of people described by the evangelists does not involve sensational facts. They are signs of something greater, that is, God’s healing of humankind. Healing is returning to humankind the wholeness of being that was lost in Adam. Every sin committed tears a person up from within, it exacerbates the contradiction between what is desired and what is real.

According to the apostle Paul, a person states that he or she does not do the good he or she wants but the very evil he or she hates (see Rom 7:15-20). This interior contradiction is not treated by pills or psychoanalysis, it is not reached by the best surgeon’s scalpel. But what is not possible for people is possible for God. The Son of God grants healing by forgiving sins.



When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

Jn 6:14

Dmytro: Was there a time when Christ was not able to work miracles?

Father Andrii: Yes, not because he “could not,” but because his miracle required human faith. Since sin is the result of an abuse of freedom, human consent is required to get rid of it. That is why Christ asks a person prior to healing, “Do you believe that I can do this to you?”

A person’s faith is a condition for God to perform a miracle, by faith a person cooperates with God for his or her own healing. Christ never performed miracles for show, for selfpromotion or “automatically.” For instance, when he came to Nazareth, he did not perform any miracle there because of the unbelief of the people (see Mt 13:58). When Christ under arrest was brought to Herod, Herod asked Jesus for “some sort of miracle” just for fun. But the miracle did not happen (see Lk 23:9). Crucified on Christ’s left, the thief also asked for a miracle to be saved from the Cross: “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” (Luke 23:29). Usually, a miracle is understood to be earthly success along with physical healing and even some kind of supernatural phenomenon. Christ came to heal people, and to put it differently, to restore their wholeness.



All good things produced in the human soul are sown by the Word of God who was ‘in the beginning with God’. These became offspring of the kingdom of God.

Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*



The healing of a paralyzed man (Jn 5:1-15)

Exterior healing without interior conversion will only deepen the contradiction between a body that is healthy and a spirit that is sick, a person will sin with even greater force because he or she has not renounced sin. That is why Christ first heals a person's soul: "Friend, your sins are forgiven you" (Lk 5:20), and then a person's body afterward: "Stand up and go" (Lk 5:24).

The faith that Christ expects of a person is his or her response to God's call. Personal faith is more than just a rational recognition of certain points and definitions. Our personal "Yes" is contained in our personal faith. By this "Yes" we enter into communion with Christ, and then through faith we attain salvation. "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk 16:16).



As the signs of God's action in the time of Christ were his miracles, so in the life of the Church the signs are the Holy Mysteries.

Christ— Our Pascha, 214

Christ compares a person's salvation to his or her entry into the kingdom of God, the laws of which he announces in the Sermon

on the Mount.

The Good News of Christ's salvation can be received through repentance.

The kingdom of God, like a grain during sowing, grows unnoticeably in the hearts of those who have received it.

Christ confirmed his words by significant works, which we call miracles. Essentially, miracles address the healing of humankind and restoring in it the harmony between the spiritual and the physical.

For a miracle to happen, a person's faith is needed.



Theme 13

Christ's Pascha (Passion and Resurrection)



The Passion of Christ



As they [the apostles] were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised.

Mt 17:22-23



What is this suffering that he suffered for us? It is the suffering of love.
Love is suffering.

Origen, *Commentary on Ezekiel*

Martyn: Father Andrii, we see Crosses on the domes of a church. We know that the Cross is a Christian symbol. I have heard that the Cross turned out to be a dishonourable method of execution by hanging. And by that, they say, there is really nothing to be proud of. What do you think about this?

Father Andrii: The Cross was indeed an instrument of the death penalty. An innocent Lord Jesus was subjected to horrific torture and cruel death on the Cross on charges that were unjust. No one apologized to Jesus' loved ones. The charges brought against him were not dropped. He was never exonerated. For Jesus himself, any justifications, "being released from custody," and "being exchanged for the criminal Barabbas" were not important.

According to the testimony of the evangelists, he remained speechless in response to all the horror of the proceedings, the lies of false witnesses, the belittling of his human dignity. Even his main judge, Pontius Pilate, was very surprised. Even after the Crucifixion, the Pharisees, hardened enemies of Christ, forced Pilate to set up a round-the-clock guard near Jesus' tomb: "That impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore, command that the tomb be made secure" (Mt 27:63-64). The irony was that the Pharisees were understandably afraid. Christ's Passion and Death paradoxically led to his Resurrection. On the third day after his death on the Cross he was raised, and, as a result, his Cross became the sign of salvation for Christians.



The Descent into Hades

Hades, according to long-established impressions, is the lowest, “nethermost” level of being. The souls of people find their way there after their death. Christ, who came down from heaven to earth, in turn, came down after his Death to the dead to bring salvation to all. The icon shows how Christ, standing on the broken gates, finds Adam, the first human, in Hades and takes him by the wrist, where the pulse of life beats, and leads him into his divine glory, which is symbolized by the oval mandorla around the figure of Jesus. In this manner Christ’s victory over sin and death is completed on a cosmic scale. The new Adam — Christ — returns the first Adam not only to his lost heavenly state, but also gives him a new dignity of being a child of God.

Dmytro: So, has the Cross become an instrument of victory over death?

Father Andrii: No doubt. In the light of the Resurrection, it turned out that even human death in this world has a relative, transitional, or Paschal, character. Fundamentally, the very word “pascha” means “passage.” Furthermore, when we celebrate Pascha each year, we remember the inseparably interconnected Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, every image of the crucified Jesus testifies to Christ’s Pascha. The Cross is what we can see and what integrates us into the miracle of the resurrection from the dead that our eyes cannot see.

Marichka: Pascha is usually understood as a basket of food. And what is the deeper meaning of this feast?

Father Andrii: What happened to Jesus Christ is not just a historical fact. In this event, Christ bears witness to his obedience to the Father until death and accepted everything, “the entire cup,” which the Father gave him to drink. The Son of God took on human flesh, and with it all the earthly lot, so that he could sympathize with our weaknesses in all things. He himself, having no sin, took upon himself, as the sacrificial Lamb, the sin of the world, to destroy this sin on the Cross. He sacrifices his life for us sinners because, in his words, “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13).

The Son of God also took on human flesh in order to find death in this body and to incapacitate it. He allowed people to bind him in the Garden of Gethsemane, and then to whip him, to put a crown of thorns on his head, and to crucify him on a Cross.



The one who will come to know the depth of the Cross and tomb and who will be initiated into the Mystery of the Resurrection, will come to know the purpose toward which God initially established all things.

Maximus the Confessor, *Chapters on the Theology and the Incarnate Economy of the Son of God*



The Pascha of Jesus Christ is his passing through suffering and death to his glorification in the Resurrection and Ascension. In the deepest sense, Christ himself is the Pascha (Passover) (see 1 Cor 5:6-8), for the passage from death to life takes place in him.

Christ— Our Pascha, 215

In the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Surely he has borne our infirmities ... But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities ... and by his bruises we are healed” (Isa 53:4-5).

After it encountered the sordid nature of the world’s sin, the immenseness of God’s love on the Cross, after it encountered the sordid nature of the world’s sin, did not retreat in the face of sin but conquered it.

Sin, having caused death, was exhausted, and love, having accepted death, remained. Therefore, on the Cross, it was not death that consumed life, but life that consumed death, finally conquering it by the Resurrection. Christ's Death became the Pascha (passage) to life. Christ's Death and Resurrection are inseparably interconnected, and that is why we sing: "To your Cross, O Master, we bow in veneration, and we glorify your holy Resurrection!"

Chrystyna: And why do we remember the Pascha event every year?

Father Andrii: We are not merely reminded of it, we become its participants. For Christ's Resurrection is the answer to the question of what will happen to us after death. Jesus Christ is the unique witness who, after being in the "other world" after his Death, returned from there on the third day and declared that there is life after death. And that this is not a desire, not a fantasy, nor an illusion, but a reality: He is "truly risen!"

Taking this reality into account, all sickness, suffering and even death itself take on a Paschal meaning. We can no longer be afraid of them. The hope and joy of the Resurrection now heal sadness and depression caused by death. We lack joy when the truth about the Resurrection has not yet been accepted. Thus, as we celebrate Pascha, we grow in the joy of Pascha.



Like a yearling lamb, willingly was Christ sacrificed for all — a purifying Pascha — then shone on us anew from the tomb, the beautiful Sun of righteousness.

Paschal Matins, Canon, Ode 4

It is the day of the Resurrection! Let us be resplendent in celebration, let us embrace one another. Let us say "Brethren" even to those who hate us. Let us forgive everything on the Resurrection.

Paschal Matins, Stichira at the Praises



They got up [and left Emmaus] and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon.'

Lk 24:33-34

Jesus was innocently sentenced to be crucified. He voluntarily accepted this condemnation, humiliation, and even death itself.

But his Death was not the end, but the way to the Resurrection.

Therefore, the Lord's Cross became the sign of victory over death and sin, the sign of our salvation.

Christ, as the Paschal Lamb, took upon himself sin and conquered it through forgiveness.

Theme 14

The Ascension and Second Coming of Christ



The Ascension of the Lord (Lk 24:50-53)



In his Ascension, Christ raised renewed human nature to divine glory.

Christ — Our Pascha, 237



[He] is raising souls through appropriate words for the reception of his manifest divine presence, which he is ever bringing about, turning the worthy away from the flesh toward the spirit through the virtues; and he will be bringing it about also until the end of the age, revealing manifestly [the Mysteries] till now ineffable to all.

Maximus the Confessor, *Chapters on the Theology and the Incarnate Economy of the Son of God*

Marichka: Father Andrii, in the Profession of Faith we say: “He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.” Does this mean that Christ ascended into outer space?

Father Andrii: Christ’s Ascension is not some supernatural phenomenon, an exception to the laws of nature. The Son of God, inseparably united to human nature, ascended to the Father in his glorified human nature. “Sitting at the right hand of the Father” means the new and unlimited possibilities for a divinized humankind that God reveals in Jesus Christ. Essentially, the “right hand” is the image of strength (a strong hand), and “sitting” on the throne (enthroned) — this strength is put into practice.

The event of the Ascension took place on the fortieth day after Christ’s Resurrection. Christ ascended from us into heaven in order, as the Holy Spirit was sent, to remain with us on earth.

Originating from the Mystery of his Passion and Death, Christ raises the apostles to the mystery of the resurrection from the dead. He raises them from fear (“Do not be afraid!”) toward joy (“Rejoice!”). Professing our faith in Christ’s Ascension, we recognize that we cannot raise humankind to a better future on our own, and at the same time we recognize that in Christ we have a clear axis of development — not only of what is personal and social, but also of what is material and economic.



For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Mt 4:27



Lord, when your apostles saw you being lifted up on the clouds, they were filled with sadness, and they grieved. And with tearful lamentation they said to you, O Christ and Giver of life: ‘Master, do not make orphans of us your servants, whom you loved in your mercy. But as you promised, send us your Most Holy Spirit to enlighten our souls..

Vespers on the Lord’s Ascension, Stichira during “O Lord, I have cried”

Chrystyna: I learned from the Gospel that after Christ departed from the apostles, they returned to Jerusalem rejoicing. Why rejoice here given that they were left alone?

Father Andrii: Before his Ascension, Christ said: “Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20). He ascended from the Mount of Olives in order not to be limited to any one place but to be present in every place and at every time. Christ, who became incarnate, was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, died, and has been raised in Jerusalem. Having ascended into heaven, Christ freely reveals his presence wherever his Word is preached or the Eucharistic bread of his resurrected Body is broken.

Christ’s Ascension is the key to the successful advancement of humankind into the kingdom of God, despite all the difficulties and obstacles which the “forces of darkness” place along this path: “I go to prepare a place for you. ... So that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn 14:2-3). The meaning of the Ascension is in the preparation of what is the best for us, the people, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived” (1 Cor 2:9; compare Isa 64:3).

When Christ was taken up to heaven and became invisible to the apostles, they could not take their eyes off heaven. And then they heard this assurance: “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Dmytro: And when exactly will Christ come a “second time?” Is his second coming the same as the end of the world?

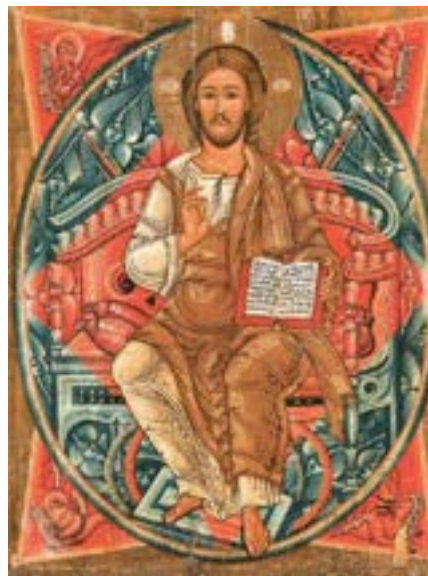
Father Andrii: Is it possible to somehow predict or guess that day in history, the time and place of the second coming of Christ?

Christ himself answers this question in the following way: “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mk 13:32; compare Mt 24:36). These words mean that none of the false prophets, futurists, and fortune-tellers like them, actually know what they are saying, as they attempt to calculate the date of the Lord’s day, but they simply speculate on human curiosity in order to attract some attention. As a consequence, the second coming is not the end of the world.



And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mt 24:30



The Saviour in Glory

The image of Christ on the throne in the radiance of his divine glory (its symbol is a red rhombus), surrounded by angelic hosts — the cherubim, the seraphim, and the thrones (in a blue mandorla), and four apocalyptic angels — symbols of the evangelists (Ezek 1:5-21; Rev 4:6-8) who spread his glory and teachings to ends of the whole world (a red rectangle with concave sides), create a complex composition, the purpose of which is to convey the main idea of Christ’s second and glorious coming as Judge and King of the New Jerusalem. Then the final fulfillment of the divine plan will come

about with respect to creation in heaven and on earth — “to gather up all things in Christ” (Eph 1:10), so that they all may be one, in the image of the Trinity. That is why the figure of Christ dominates the composition and seems to take to himself all other symbolic images.

Serhii: Will the second coming bring something new?

Father Andrii: The words “He will come again in glory” before all else point to what began in Christ’s Resurrection. After all, he took upon himself the shame of death in order to subsequently come to the apostles on the third day in the glory of his Resurrection. From this victory over death the second coming of Christ received its starting point, so that the fullness of this coming is revealed in the resurrection of all the dead.

The apostles saw a new creation in the body of their resurrected Master. The novelty here is that “Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him” (Rom 6:9). In his Resurrection, Christ conquered the power of time over humankind, which time has condemned to grow old, to become sick, and to die. Due to its dependance on time, all humankind is an “old creation,” in other words, a creation which is changing and transitory.

In the Eucharistic Christ, a “new creation” manifests itself to the human race in its full sense, one that will never grow old or die. So, if in the “first coming” the Son of God took the “form of a slave” and became a helpless infant under the care of Mary and Joseph, then his Resurrection initiated the “second coming” and revealed a perfect human life where there is “no pain, no sorrow, no mourning.”

The Awe-Inspiring Judgment

To represent the universal scale of Christ’s second coming, the icon of the awe-inspiring Judgment has three distinct tiers. The upper tier depicts two angels rolling up a scroll with the sun, the moon, and the stars — a symbol of the end of the world. Jesus Christ ascends in glory, surrounded by angels, saints along with the apostles who are seated on thrones.

In the middle part are symmetrically depicted rows of representatives of different social classes and nations, and in the center of this row — the symbolic image of the Trinity in the form of the Throne Prepared, where judgment will take place. A book is open on the altar, revealing everything that had been hidden until then. The right hand of God weighs each person’s good and evil deeds on the scales. On either side the figures of Adam and Eve are depicted, representing all humankind.

The lowest tier depicts life beyond the grave. It is a symbolic image of hell in the form of a serpent’s mouth, into which a river of fire “flows,” and there are underground depths with sinners who have received their punishments. A walled Paradise is also found here, in front of which the righteous are

gathered under the leadership of the apostle Peter and in which the Most Holy Mother of God is already surrounded by angels and the forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet table — the image of the blessedness of the righteous in Paradise according to Old Testament tradition.



It is also important to note that in icons, unlike other works of art, the left and right parts are read not in relation to the viewer, but in relation to the image on the icon. So, if you read the awe-inspiring Judgment from top to bottom, you can see the Mother of God, the representatives of the Christian orders of holiness and Paradise are positioned at the right hand of God, while John the Baptist, the representatives of non-Christian peoples led by Moses, the earthly world and hell are situated on the left side. In this way, a certain orderly hierarchy of presented images is built.



Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Mt 24:42



It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

Jn 16:7



Just as he ascended in his human nature to divine glory, so he will return again in his glorified human nature for judgment.

Christ— Our Pascha, 238

Christ's Resurrection continues in time constantly, conquering the course of history. The Resurrection is, in the full sense of the word, an event that continues to happen. It happened in time, while overcoming any time constraints. This means that even now the risen Christ comes to each of us according to our ability to receive him. He comes to us both in the Eucharistic bread and wine, and in the person of our neighbour, especially the one in need: I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, I was a stranger, I was sick... (see Mt 25:35-36). Christ, present in history, prepares us for the fullness of his coming in glory.

Serhii: Has Christ already come or will he still come?

Father Andrii: The Lord, having come in his glorious Resurrection, is waiting for the time when we will be ready to receive him in the fullness of his glory. That is why we cry out in hope, "Come, Lord!", likewise we look for the "end of the world" not surrounded by any anxiety and trepidation. God, who wants everyone to be converted and come to the knowledge of the truth, creates conditions and opportunities for this by commanding us to go out and preach the Gospel to "all creation."



And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mt 24:30

Christ's Ascension reveals new possibilities for Christ to be with every person, always and everywhere.

The second coming of Christ in glory began in Christ's Resurrection in order for Christ to come one day in the fullness of his glory.

Christ enters the life of every person as much as he or she can "contain" him. He looks for humankind's spiritual maturation, which will be manifested in the intense "looking for" the day of the Lord's second coming.

Theme 15

The Descent of the Holy Spirit



The Descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)



When the day of Pentecost had come ... suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house ... and divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them [the apostles], and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.



Within the life-giving Spirit, there is no death or division. Therefore, at the feast of Pentecost we visit the graves of the departed and prayerfully experience our living bond with them ... On this feast, churches and homes are decorated with greenery, a sign of Life. This is truly a feast of life — the Green Feast or ‘Feast of Greenery,’ known in Ukrainian as *Zeleni Sviata*.

Christ — Our Pascha, 270

Marichka: Father Andrii, how is Christ present among us, even though he ascended into heaven?

Father Andrii: He is present by the action of the third Person of the Most Holy Trinity — the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and descended upon the apostles on the fiftieth day after Christ’s Resurrection. Even before his Passion, Christ promised his disciples: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever” (Jn 14:16). And this Holy Spirit will guide the disciples into all the truth that Christ taught (compare Jn 16:13).

The apostles did not yet understand Christ’s words, perceiving them subjectively, in an earthly way. Then, having received the Holy Spirit, they finally understood — not like before, but truly — even the meaning of the kingdom of God, and their place in it. For them, the kingdom of God has become a daily reality, and its spread — the work of a lifetime. The Holy Spirit freed them from fears and doubts, in the words of Christ: “And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32).



Heavenly King, Advocate, Spirit of truth, who are everywhere present and fill all things, treasury of blessings, bestower of life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all that defiles us, and, O Good One, save our souls.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit



When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ... Because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Jn 15:26; 16:4

Daryna: On the day of Pentecost, the apostles go out to the people. What does this mean?

Father Andrii: This means the victory of the apostles' faith over fear, freedom over necessity, Divine Providence over destiny, life over death. The Holy Spirit calls not only the apostles but all people to such a victory. With the help of the Holy Spirit, everyone can live their life as a vocation from God. There are no people uninvited, talentless, superfluous or unnecessary. A person's "sensitivity" to the action of the Holy Spirit depends on the intensity of the spiritual life with which he or she prepares his or her heart to receive divine grace.

The word "grace" [Ukr. *blahodat*] (a gift given out of what is good) refers to the free action of the Holy Spirit. He not only calls a person, but also gives everything necessary for the realization of this vocation, which is infinitely beyond our dreams and plans in life. In cooperation with the Holy Spirit, we realize ourselves much more fully than acting on our own.



Behold the fire and the Spirit in the womb which bore you. Behold the fire and the Spirit in the river in which you were baptized. Fire and Spirit are in our baptism. Fire and the Holy Spirit are in the bread and the cup. In your bread is hidden the Spirit which cannot be eaten. In your wine dwells the fire that cannot be drunk. Spirit in your bread, fire in your wine: It is a distinct wonder that our lips have received.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns of Faith*

Martyn: What do we need to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit properly?

Father Andrii: As a result of Pentecost, we begin to understand why we have a spiritual life: to pray, to go to church, to confess and receive Communion, to do works of faith. Only when we grow in the grace of the Holy Spirit do we perceive the circumstances of our lives as opportunities to realize our salvation, and not as “objective challenges without any solutions.”

As he goes to his Father in the Ascension, Christ promises the apostles the Holy Spirit, and on the fiftieth day after the Resurrection he sends the Holy Spirit to the apostles.

Having descended upon the disciples, the Holy Spirit gives them the grace to understand their vocation and to inspire them to act according to their vocation.

The Holy Spirit gives us a vocation meant for our salvation and the strength to live according to our vocation.

A “sensitivity” to the grace of the Holy Spirit develops in our spiritual life.

Theme 16

The Church — Community of the Faithful. The Most Holy Mother of God and All the Saints



The Eucharist (The Communion of the Apostles)

In the Sophia of Kyiv's mosaic, the Saviour's Mystical Supper is presented liturgically. The apostles do not "lie down" as they did during the meal itself, and they do not sit at the table, as on the Leonardo da Vinci's famous canvas. They, as partakers in the temple, approach the Holy Table with Christ nearby giving them Communion. In the mosaic, Christ is represented twice to emphasize the double symbolism of the Eucharist — the Bread and the Chalice. The bread symbolizes the unity of the Body of Christ — the Church; the Chalice is the communion of the faithful in the life of Christ, in his Passion and Resurrection.



For just as the body is one and has many members, ... so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... The body does not consist of one member but of many. Now you are the Body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 Cor 12:12-14, 27

Daryna: Father, I read that the Descent of the Holy Spirit is the Church's birthday. What does that mean?

Father Andrii: Christ begins to build his Church when he called the twelve apostles. And on the fiftieth day after his Resurrection, he sends the Holy Spirit, and from them he creates the Church — the community of salvation. And on this day the community of the Church is no longer limited to the apostles and disciples as it was before. Those who have heard the Good News of salvation and kept believing the words of the apostles have become members of the Church. Everything that Christ did during his earthly life “for our sake and for our salvation” he makes relevant in the Church even today.

The action of the Holy Spirit is not limited to Jerusalem, where the Pentecost story took place. Christ sends the apostles out “to the Gentiles” so that everyone may know the truth and receive salvation. The Church is the Body of Christ (compare Eph 1:22-23), whose head is Christ, the faithful are its members, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies and transfigures the faithful and is the “Soul of the Body,” in other words, of the Church. It is in the Church that a person is freed from selfishness and grows in love for God and for his or her neighbour.



For the creation of the cosmos signifies the foundation of the Church, in which, according to the words of the prophet, both a “new heaven” is created (Is 65:17), which is the “firmament of faith in Christ” (Col 2:5), as Paul says, and a new earth is established, which drinks the rain that falls upon it, and another humanity, renewed by the birth from above after the image of its Creator (compare Col 3:10).

Chrystyna: And how does one grow in this love?

Father Andrii: Participating in the Mysteries, particularly in the Mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist, contributes the most to our growth in love for God and for our neighbour. When we partake of the Lord's Body and Blood, we simultaneously become partakers of the divine nature (compare 2 Pet 1:4) and corresponding partakers to each other. The Eucharistic union between people, in other words, communion, is infinitely stronger than all possible human ways of being united.

Daryna: Why do we pray in the Divine Liturgy for the holy Churches of God, if the Church, according to the Profession of Faith, is one?

Father Andrii: Christ sent his apostles out to all nations without exception. In every nation that accepts the Gospel, the one Christian Church becomes its own for that nation, that means, self-governing. Serving the salvation of the faithful, the Church, like Christ, "accepts the body" of this people and is incarnated in its culture.

In building the Church according to Christ's Commandment, the apostles ordained bishops to serve the local communities, and those bishops ordained priests (presbyters) and deacons. Patriarchs, metropolitans or archbishops are at the head of self-governing Churches.

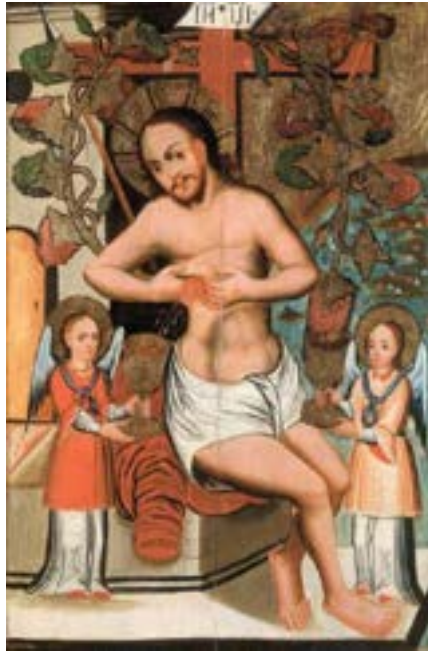
Martyn: And who is the Pope in the Church?

Father Andrii: The Pope (the Bishop of Rome) is the bearer of Peter's apostolic ministry of the unity and communion of the self-governing Churches. Communion with him is a manifestation of belonging to the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church."



As his will is creation, and is called the universe, so his desire is the salvation of humankind, and is called the Church.

Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*



Christ — The Vine (Jn 15:1-11)

Serhii: You mentioned “the holy Church,” but are we not sinners?

Father Andrii: Yes, we are sinners, but at the same time we are called to holiness through growth in love. Those who have reached God’s love and were glorified by him are called saints. We venerate them by continuing to be with them within the communion of the one Body of Christ, in other words, the Church.

Communion in the Church is not limited only to the present historical moment, but transcends time constraints and connects the living and the dead as one, people and angels, New Testament saints and the righteous of the Old Testament. All of them, especially the Most Holy Mother of God, intercede for us in prayer unceasingly, and we venerate them by praying to them. For those who now live in Christ and those who have already died in Christ, — all continue to be in the one Body of Christ, in which the Son of God conquered death and united into one those separated by death.



The apostle Peter with scenes from his life



O divine choir of martyrs, foundation of the Church ... The gates of Hades, which were opened against the Church, were shut by you ... your sacrifice gave birth to the Universal Church.

Vespers of the Sunday of All Saints, Stichira during “O Lord, I have cried”



The Church is where we are to grow in the holiness that is granted by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us on the path of holiness, offering the grace of repentance and divinization. ... Those who enter the Church through the “doors of repentance,” pass through the “doors of Paradise” into God’s sanctification and blessing.

Christ — Our Pascha, 289

On the day of Pentecost, the Christian Church — the community of salvation — is born.

The source and summit of Church life is the Eucharist, through which Christians are united to God and among themselves in the

one Body of Christ.

Sent by Christ out to the nations, the Church serves for the salvation of the people by evangelizing the cultures of these nations.

In each of these nations, the Church becomes self-governing, overseen by its head.

The Bishop of Rome is the minister of communion of self-governing Churches.

Communion in the risen Christ applies to the living and the dead.

In the Church, sinners are transfigured into the righteous and the saints.

Theme 17

Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins



Theophany of our Lord (Mt 3:13-17)



I [John the Baptist] baptize you with water; but [...] he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Lk 3:16-17



Faith and baptism are two ways of salvation that are naturally united with each other and indivisible. While faith is perfected by baptism, baptism is established by faith.

Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*

Dmytro: If Christ conquered death, then why do we die?

Father Andrii: We die as the descendants of Adam our first father, because through his sin all people are mortal and alienated from God and inclined to sin. As for our mortality, we either superstitiously avoid the very idea of death or naively run away from it into consumerism and hedonism. Alienation from God leads us into the deception of self-sufficiency when we think of God as superfluous and unnecessary in our lives. We disguise our sins, either by ignoring them or by justifying them given our personality or given the influence of our environment. The apostle Paul sums up humankind's threefold problem with the following words: "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24).

When the Son of God came to earth, he removed the barrier of alienation, of sinfulness, and, as a result, of human mortality. He overcame alienation at the time of his Incarnation through the inseparable union of his divine nature with human nature, he overcame sinfulness through the forgiveness of all sins on the Cross, and he overcame mortality through his Resurrection from the dead. Therefore, according to the apostle Paul, Christ is the "new Adam," and the old Adam is a "type of the One who was to come" (Rom 5:14), in other words, Christ. We, through baptism, become descendants of the new Adam — Christ — and join in his victory over death.



In Baptism a person receives remission of all sins ... Having been united to Christ and having become a temple of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is freed

from enslavement to sin and death through the action of divine grace. He or she becomes capable of growing into the likeness of God.

Christ — Our Pascha, 415



Now when they heard this [Peter’s words], they [being gathered in Jerusalem] were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.’

Acts 2:37-38

Martyn: And how does a person through baptism participate in Christ’s victory over death?

Father Andrii: In baptism, as we renounce the devil and “all his deceitfulness,” we divest ourselves of the legacy of the old Adam, like some well-worn clothing, and are united to Christ, putting on the bright garments of the new Adam.

Baptism unites humankind to God and opens the way to its divinization. Fundamentally, as the Holy Fathers teach, “God became human so that humans may become divine.” The evil one tempted Adam with the delusion of self-divinization and self-sufficiency, yet Christ bestowed his grace, which has enabled us, Adam’s descendants, to become “divine by grace.”



O Lord, look upon this work of your hands, and send into it the grace of redemption and the blessing of the Jordan. Make this water a fountain of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, endowed with the power to forgive sins, the power to heal infirmities, and unapproachable by opposing forces, filled with angelic might.

The Order of Baptism



For through the remission of sins is granted to all alike, the communication of the Holy Spirit is granted in proportion to the faith of each. ... You are running for yourself, so look to your own advantage.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*

In Christ we also receive the forgiveness and remission of sins — we eliminate that second barrier between us and God. In effect, our sin is not only that we have done evil, but also, that we have not done good. The forgiveness of sins, given by Christ in baptism, means for us freedom from them.

And finally, our resurrection has its starting point from our baptism, the apostle Paul offers his testimony about its activity in us: “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11). In baptism we are immersed in Christ’s Death in order to achieve our own resurrection arising out of his Resurrection. And so, our death in Christ is the passing over from death to life, the beginning of “life for God.”



Philip baptizes the Ethiopian court official (Acts 8:26-40)

Each person has received a share in Adam's inheritance, which lies in being alienated from God, being inclined to sin, and experiencing mortality.

Christ brought salvation to humankind: he removed Adam's inheritance through his Incarnation, his death on the Cross, and his Resurrection from the dead.

Now in the Mystery of Baptism we receive the "inheritance of Christ" — new life and the grace of the God for divinization.

Theme 18

The Resurrection of the Dead



The Raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44)



The hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Jn 5:25



The glorification of a Christian's body already takes place in the Mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist, when it becomes one with the glorified Christ.

Dmytro: Father Andrii, what does it mean to look for the resurrection of the dead?

Father Andrii: According to the Profession of Faith, we “look for the resurrection of the dead,” in other words, we prepare for it. In the words of Christ, the resurrection of the dead has already begun: “The hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (Jn 5:25). But this depends on our attitude that it should be “to the resurrection of life” and not “to the resurrection of condemnation”: “And all will come out — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (Jn 5:29).

And besides, Christ speaks of the connection between death and resurrection using the following comparison: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24). Resurrection occurs after death, as the germination of a grain occurs after its sowing in the ground. Christ, having conquered the sin of humankind, conquers human death — the consequence of sin: “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor 15:26).

Resurrection begins with the belief and repentance of a person still “buried” under their sins. Jesus Christ himself, in the parable of the prodigal son, compares a person’s repentance to the resurrection: “Because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found” (Lk 15:32).



The Raising of the Son of the Widow of Nain (Lk 7:11-17)

Thus the “time” of resurrection, in the words of Christ, not only “is coming” but also “is now here.” A person who has died in his or her sins hears the “voice of the Son of God” in the preaching of the Gospel, and “hearing it,” lives by the grace of the Holy Spirit. In it the “old Adam” dies (“it is no longer I who live”) and the new Adam begins to live (“it is Christ who lives in me”) (compare Gal 2:20). In the Mystery of Baptism, the grains of new life “fall into the earth” of ordinary human life, marked by what is transitory and mortal. And these seeds that have been sown, as the apostle Paul teaches, must grow: “What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable” (1 Cor 15:42).

Martyn: So, it turns out that we are not really dying?

Father Andrii: Yes, because through faith in Christ we are already passing from death to life: “Anyone who hears my Word and believes ... has passed from death to life” (Jn 5:24). In death itself, humankind is given the opportunity to get rid of all traces of sinfulness that interfere with a fulfilling life. On this “path” toward resurrection, we accompany the dead with prayers, so that the “path” to their resurrection will be completed in a blessed way: “Blessed is the way on which you walk today, O soul, for a place of rest is prepared for you” (The Prokeimenon of the Order of Burial).

Serhii: And how is one to understand the “resurrection of condemnation” about which you spoke?

Father Andrii: The “resurrection of life” that Christ gives to all, a person can reduce this to the “resurrection of condemnation.” And the condemnation, according to Christ, is that “light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil” (Jn 3:19). Accordingly, those who have done evil will come out to the resurrection of condemnation.



The dead will be raised from the tombs, and all will become of one stature.
And each one's secrets will be manifest before you.

Matins for Meatfare Sunday, Stichira



It was God himself who raised the man who had been mixed with him. After he had separated his soul from his body, he joined them together again, so that there is salvation for the whole of human nature.

On the day of Christ's glorious second coming, all kinds of hidden evil will finally "manifest themselves," which will not stand up against the light of Christ. Everything still hidden will become disclosed, "for there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed" (Mk 4:22), and the hypocritical mask of virtue will be pulled off belonging to any kind of evil.

For the "sin of the world" (compare Jn 1:29) and all the actions of the evil one this condemnation will be terrible, because it will carry the final judgment on the evil one and will mean the utter defeat of the "evil one and all his angels," and with them — all the "offspring of the evil one too," in other words, totalitarian systems, inhumane ideologies, and forms of culture that are humiliating for people.

Marichka: Do people call this Judgment of God fearful because they fear hell?

Father Andrii: The second coming of Christ will not turn wicked people into good people automatically, without their knowledge and consent. If, according to Christ, they loved darkness more than light, then even the light of their physical resurrection will not overcome the darkness they themselves have chosen, and it will not overcome their desire to remain in darkness. Then, according to the teachings of the Church Fathers, the light of God's kingdom will become hellfire for them. God's presence alongside them will be unbearable for them due to their rejection of him.

Hell is the choice of those people who respond to God's love of them and to righteous people with hatred and aggressive behaviour because they do not accept any other relations. In the words of Saint Augustine, hell is a being deprived of life. Beings in hell "exist" because God called them into being, and therefore they are unable to "not exist." However, a radical break with God — the source of life — leads to the fact that they do not have life in themselves (compare Jn 6:53) but linger in death: "God will take away [their] share in the tree of life" (compare Rev 22:19).



The Resurrection of the Dead (fragment of the “Awe-Inspiring Judgment” icon)

Accompanied by the sounds of trumpets, angels announce from the four corners of the world the glorious second coming of Christ, during which the dead will be raised, and “the earth and sea will give up the dead” (compare Rev 20:13). The surface of the earth is surrounded by water. People buried in the ground are coming out of their graves in bright clothes of the resurrection, those submerged underwater rise from the depths of the sea. In this way, the history of what has passed is completed in order to acquire in the resurrection the features of the history of what is permanent according the Father’s plan of the Almighty.

Daryna: Father, I hope that looking for the resurrection of the dead brings hope for Christians, not fear...

Father Andrii: Yes. Through our Christian faith, we rely on Christ’s firm promise concerning eternal life: “Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgement, but has passed from death to life” (Jn 5:24), and that is why we hope and look for the resurrection of the dead. Really, we do not look for death when they bury us and forget about us, but the “resurrection of the dead,” when all the good that we have begun here will not only continue but will be transfigured by the Lord into creation that is new.



Paradise which has been restored (a fragment of the “Awe-Inspiring Judgment” icon)

It seemed that Paradise, lost through the sin of the first parents, continued to exist in the past. However, Christ destroys only sin and transfigures everything else that was created “good” (compare Gen 1:10.12.18.21.25.31). The beginnings of renewing Paradise on earth are personified in the Most Holy Mother of God — the new Eve, who for humankind gave birth to Jesus Christ. On the icon she sits on a throne, the symbol of praise. Next to her is the half-naked, good thief crucified on Golgotha to the right of Jesus. Through repentance, he is the first to enter Paradise, according to Christ’s promise. The bottom bar of the Lord’s Cross, pointed from his side upwards, indicates his path to Paradise. Together with the Most Holy Mother of God, he belongs to the new, saved humankind.

A person’s resurrection to new life begins from the moment of his or her belief and repentance in order to find its completion in the future with resurrection in the body.

After a person’s death and prior to his or her resurrection, God gives a person the grace of maturing to new life. The day of Christ’s glorious second coming will become the day of the resurrection of the dead.

For those who have neglected believing and repentance, this day will also become the day of the Awe-Inspiring Judgment of all human sins, both personal ones and of the “sin of the world.”

Non-acceptance of Christ’s glory is also hell — unrepentant sinners lingering in death beyond life with God.

Acceptance of Christ leads people to a renewed “life of the world to come.”



In the Resurrection, Christ will lead humankind out from the dominion of death and corruption.

Christ — Our Pascha, 245

Theme 19

The Life of the World to Come. Amen



Kyiv — the New Jerusalem



And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

Rev 22:5



Receive us all into your kingdom, declaring us to be children of the light and children of the day. Grant us your peace and your love, O Lord, our God, for you have given us everything.

Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, Anaphora

Serhii: If in the Profession of Faith we profess the “life of the world to come,” does that mean that the world to come will come after the end of this world?

Father Andrii: Scientists’ theories about the “origin of the universe” (the initial Big Bang and scattering of galaxies) inevitably rest on the problem of its “disappearance,” and therefore — “the end of the world.” The relative world, limited in space and time, cannot be eternal. The world of nature, sooner or later having exhausted its energy resources, will have no “life in the world to come.”

Jesus Christ proposes a completely different perspective for the world, namely, that this world will be transfigured into the “world to come.” Since creation exists on behalf of itself and not of its own initiative, but it has the Creator as its beginning, in that case it owes its “world to come” to the Creator.

In the “world to come” the fullness of God’s plan for humankind’s stewardship of “the fish of the sea, of the birds of the air, of the cattle, of all the wild animals, of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Gen 1:26) will be achieved, and humankind’s relationship with creation will be renewed, lost by it through death.



And he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.’

Rev 21:4

Martyn: Are there any signs of the “world to come”?

Father Andrii: Having reached the top of Mount Tabor with his apostles, Christ introduced the world to come in the light of his transfiguration: “His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white” (Mt 17:2). The apostles also saw Moses and Elias — people from the past who appeared with Christ as contemporaries of the apostles to talk with him about the Passion to come. Transfiguration in Christ is the bridging of the time gap between the past, the present, and the future, and the gap in space between “here” and “there,” between earth and heaven.

The Transfiguration of Christ embraces not only people: Moses, Elias, and the apostles, — but also their “clothes.” This means that in the life of the “world to come” will include not only the righteous of all times and of all nations, but also the works of their hands and all the achievements of human creativity. No good deed, not even a “glass of water,” given to a thirsty person, will disappear in the past but will enter into the life of the “world to come.” As the Lord of history God will raise from oblivion and transfigure the entire worthy heritage of humankind.

Signs of the “world to come” are already in “this world,” and, as a result, they instill hope for the future. The citizens of the future are holy people. They live on earth according to the laws of the kingdom of God to come. These people are often misunderstood, ridiculed, or persecuted, so what happens is what the apostle Paul also noticed is happening, “They — of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground” (Heb 11:38). Their righteous life is a sign of the presence of the kingdom of God in the world, whereas the next day really enters the present today and transfigures it into “the day of salvation.”



The Heavenly Jerusalem

Another image of a renewed Paradise is the heavenly Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from God to earth (compare Rev 21). Depicted on the icon is heavenly Jerusalem — a walled foursquare with three gates on each side. This means that nations can enter it from all sides. The building inside the city is the “house of the Father” (Jn 14:2) with many dwelling-places. Christ guides the Most Holy Mother of God as the first one to his Father’s house. According to the thinking of the holy Fathers, it has become clear that she was the first person to be divinized of the whole human race.

Serhii: Does that mean that the catastrophe of the end of the world will not happen?

Father Andrii: No, there will be no catastrophe, God does not destroy the world but transfigures it from within, often through the “weak and foolish” in terms of the worldly success of humankind: “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor 1:27). However, it is the future that is behind them, the nature of which “this world” does not yet understand.

The “world to come” enters the present world and transfigures it like yeast leavens dough. In this way God overcomes elemental forces and what is transitory which were introduced into creation by sin. Sin has no future: there will be no place for it in Christ’s second coming, and it will disappear into the past. And yet the bearers of sin, still clinging desperately to the past, will not be able to positively create their present.



Transfiguration of our Lord (Mt 17:1-6)



Heaven is the country of the living, in which there is no night, in which there is no sleep — the image of death, in which there is no eating, no drinking — the supports of our weaknesses; in which there is no disease, no pains, no remedies, no courts of justice, no businesses, no arts, no money — the beginning of evil, the excuse for wars, the root of hatred, but a country of the living, who have not died through sin, but live the true life in Christ Jesus.

Basil the Great, *Homily on Psalm 114*

The Symbol of Faith concludes with the life-affirming expression “Amen” (“So be it”). By this “Amen,” we Christians become partakers of the transfiguring of the world, and we continue the mission of Christ’s apostles. By saying “Amen” to Christ, each person has an opportunity to build a different, better life, preventing the catastrophe of his or her own life and the destruction of the world.

And finally, the Christian “Amen” makes life whole, eliminating all contradictions, divisions, and ambiguities. Therefore, with his or her “Amen,” his or her “So be it,” a Christian accepts God, other people,

himself or herself, and the whole world without any restrictions or reservations.

The “world to come,” which we look for, we are building here and now on the spiritual and moral foundations of Christian doctrine. We will talk about what these are along the way of our fast-approaching pilgrimage. Starting in Kyiv — the cradle of our faith, we will continue it in Lviv, where our ancestors grew spiritually, so that, like Saint George, in whose honour the main Lviv shrine was built, to defeat the serpent of hatred and devastation. We feel this and see it in Lviv so thoroughly beautiful, the centuries-old seat of our metropolitans.



The Bosom of Abraham (fragment of “Awe-Inspiring Judgment” icon)

Paradise which has been restored, where the “nations” come together and congregate, is the place of God’s blessing. It started with the blessing of Abraham. From his bosom God promised to take away myriads of descendants. Therefore, the “bosom of Abraham,” which is portrayed, in a figurative sense, by the small heads of children on the chests of patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, became the symbol of God’s promise (compare Lk 16:22). Included with Abraham’s descendants is the Most Holy Mother of God, depicted here as Queen (she is sitting on a throne) and perpetual intercessor for the world (her hands raised upwards). The round shape of the icon symbolizes Paradise’s eternal reality blessed by God.

The resurrection of the dead prepares the way for eternal life, which is called the “world to come.”

An opportunity opens for humankind to realize its vocation to be the crown of creation.

Into the “world to come” will enter the saints, who, by the good deeds of their hands, have already prepared a “better future” and transfigured the world in Christ.

Everything sinful will disappear into the past, and it will have no place in the “world to come,” which at the same time will become a never-ending present.



In his glorious second coming, Christ will transfigure the whole world, which will become free of all corruption and all things that pass...

In renewed creation, the human race will behold the face of the Lord...

For humankind to be in a glorified state is to participate in the life of the Most Holy Trinity, together with the most holy Mother of God, the angels, and all the saints. Tradition calls this state heaven.

Christ — Our Pascha, 252-253



Chapter Two

We Hope



As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us

while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the Scriptures to us?’

Lk 24:28-32

We know about the Christian faith, but like the apostles, we need a relationship with the Teacher of the faith. He walks side by side, he accompanies, he interprets and helps to discover the truth. He will also help us understand the meaning of our life events. And when we approach him with faith and love, then we will understand his words, not just with our minds — our hearts will burn with love for him.





Saint George's Cathedral Lviv, 1762

For centuries this Cathedral has gathered people for prayer and nourished them with the grace of the Holy Mysteries. Our Church's righteous rest in the crypt of this cathedral, among them the Servant of God Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi and Patriarch Josyf Slipyi. They have been and remain

a sign of hope for salvation for generations of Ukrainian Christians.
Pilgrims from all over the world still visit them today.

Theme 1

Prayer — Expressing Christian Hope



Supplication (from the Greek, *Deisis*)

This icon depicts the love for humankind of Christ — the King and Judge — and the merciful love of all the saints for us, expressed in selfless and fervent supplication (intercessory prayer), giving humankind yet another chance for repentance and salvation. Contributing to his supplication is the whole visible and invisible world, represented by the Most Holy Mother of God, John the Baptist, the angels, the apostles, and sometimes other saints, if the row of supplication is extended. This prayerful intercession of theirs is especially evident for all of us during the Divine Liturgy — “the time for the Lord to act.” For he did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28).

The young pilgrims entered the cathedral’s courtyard and stopped in front of the stairs.

Marichka: What is that sculpture in the cave?

Father Andrii: That sculpture is of Saint Onuphrii. He prays and talks to God.

Marichka: And why pray?

Father Andrii: Prayer helps us to unite ourselves to God. In prayer, we turn to God and listen to his Word spoken to us. Only through prayer will our faith in God and trust in him grow.

God created people and calls them into union and communion with him. In the Old Testament we see many examples of God's desire for communication with his people. He speaks to his people, gives his people Commandments, and shows his presence in different ways. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down to earth and became human. He showed us that we are children of God. And he taught us to speak to our Father in heaven as we would speak to our own Father.

Human beings, created in the image of God, also need to interact with their Father and Creator. This communication takes place in prayer.



Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.

Mt 7:7

Pray without ceasing.

1 Thess 5:17



Lord, have mercy on us, for we have put our trust in you. Be not exceedingly angry with us and do not remember our transgressions but look upon us now with compassion. Redeem us from our enemies, for you are our God, and we are your people. We are the work of your hands, and we call upon your name.

Kontakion at the Service for General Intentions

Serhii: So prayer is a conversation between God and humankind?

Father Andrii: Correct. And we do not begin this conversation, but God does. He is the first to speak to us, although we do not always hear and understand him. It is in prayer that we have an opportunity to meet God. Prayer is a meeting of persons in which a person listens to what God tells him or her, and he or she discloses to God what is in his or her heart. This interaction with God is very important for every person. This is a dialogue: God speaks — a person listens, and vice versa... “But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Cor 6:17).



Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

Rom 8:26

Serhii: But how can we have a conversation with God?

Father Andrii: You can pray as a community as well as alone. The main thing in prayer is not what we say to God, although this is also very important. For our part, we need a desire to pray. But, we must be careful not to reduce prayer merely to “talking a lot” in front of God, because then our prayer will become just a monologue. We must leave room for silence, saying to the Lord directly after the prophet Samuel: “Speak, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:10).



Blessed are you, Lord God Almighty, who know the mind of each person, who know our needs even before we ask or are aware of them.

Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, Fifth Prayer



Saint Onuphrii — his statue was erected in the grotto beneath the steps leading up to Saint George's Cathedral, Lviv

Dmytro: How do we learn to pray well?

Father Andrii: Christ himself teaches us to pray. He gave us the *Our Father* prayer, which is why it is called the Lord's Prayer. By turning to God *Our Father*, we profess ourselves as children of God, as well as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi speaks about the Lord's Prayer: "The *Our Father* is the last word in prayer, the absolute prayer. Apart from that prayer, one could say, there is no prayer. Everything that is prayer is embodied in that prayer" (*God's Wisdom*).



In a similar fashion, we begin to speak to God in response to his speaking to us. Gradually, through the practice of prayer, God teaches us that the conversation begins not with our words, but rather with our listening. In addition to the ability to listen, prayer teaches us ... to regard what the person speaking with us is saying as more important than what we have to say.

Christ — Our Pascha, 801



Prayer by reason of its nature is the converse and union of man with God, and by reason of its action upholds the world and brings about reconciliation with God; it is the mother and also the daughter of tears, the propitiation for sins, a bridge over temptations, a wall against afflictions, a crushing of conflicts, work of angels, food of all the spiritual beings, future gladness, boundless activity, the spring of virtues, the source of graces, invisible progress, food of the soul, the enlightening of the mind, an axe for despair, a demonstration of hope, the annulling of sorrow, the wealth of monks, the treasure of solitaries, the reduction of anger, the mirror of progress, the realization of success, a proof of one's condition, a revelation of the future, a sign of glory. For one who truly prays, prayer is the court, the judgment hall and the tribunal of the Lord before the judgment to come.

John Climacus, *The Ladder*

God is our Creator. He strives to communicate with us constantly.

Humankind, created in the image and likeness of God, also needs to communicate with its Creator.

Prayer is this communication.

You can pray as a community (in the Church) and alone (personally).

Praying means, above all, listening to God. As a result of prayer, our faith in God and trust in him will grow.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, Who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.**

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**



Theme 2

Communal Prayer and Personal Prayer



Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at Saint George's Cathedral, Lviv



But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Mt 6:6



Those who pray in the name of Christ, always pray in the Church, the Body of Christ, and for the Church. Christians who praise the Lord or thank him or ask for something for themselves or for others, become the voice of their neighbour.

Christ — Our Pascha, 669

Martyn: What is communal prayer?

Father Andrii: Communal prayer is the prayer of the Church. It is usually celebrated within a divine service in church during which all the faithful participate.

The Christian Church is the union of God and humankind. It is one body, the Head of which is the Lord Jesus Christ. All of us — along with the Mother of God, the angels, and the saints — are members of this body. The Most Holy Mother of God, the angels, and the saints in heaven pray unceasingly for us to the Lord. So, when we pray, we unite ourselves to them.

Every Christian, by participating in the prayer of the Church, fills his or her life with personal prayer as well, because this is our full-fledged response to the call to be sons and daughters of our Father in heaven.

The Church — the community of the faithful — is the best environment for people to deepen their relationship with God. The Church creates the one and only family of God.

Daryna: Why do we have a desire to pray?

Father Andrii: In the Mystery of Anointing with Holy Myrrh (Chrism), a person receives the Holy Spirit, who inspires him or her to pray. From that moment forward, the Holy Spirit — the third Person of God — accompanies us every minute of our lives. The Holy Spirit creates our prayer by inspiring it and helps us to pray. It is thanks to the Holy Spirit that we have a desire to pray.

The apostle Paul says that the Holy Spirit “helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought” (Rom 8:26). But even an

unbaptized person may feel the desire to pray, because all people are created to communicate with God.



A protester praying during the Maidan protests. Kyiv, 2014

Dmytro: And I myself like to pray...

Father Andrii: Even praying alone, we are not alone, because as Christians we are members of the Body of Christ — the Church. Our relationship with God is that of a Father and a child. Therefore, contact with him, in other words, our prayer, is of a personal nature. An example of such a prayer is the prayer of Jesus Christ. He often prayed at night, alone, talking to his Father in heaven.

The Church teaches us how to communicate with God personally, to encounter him. To do so, she has preserved and handed down prayers that are an example of a person's personal conversation with God: daily, morning, evening prayers, prayers used for special needs or intended for certain events in life.



When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.

Mt 6:7

Serhii: When is the best time to pray and what prayers can be used?

Father Andrii: The apostle Paul teaches: “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). This means that our whole life must become a prayer. After all, prayer is not just the recitation of words. It is constantly being in the presence of God, an unceasing commemoration of the Lord and a love for him.



David was king of ancient Israel. He tried to be faithful to God. He sincerely focuses his gratitude and praise, his falling into sin and his feeling sorrow for them, into words to form prayer – into the Psalms, which across the millennia inspire people to strive for a deeper experience of communion with God.



Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

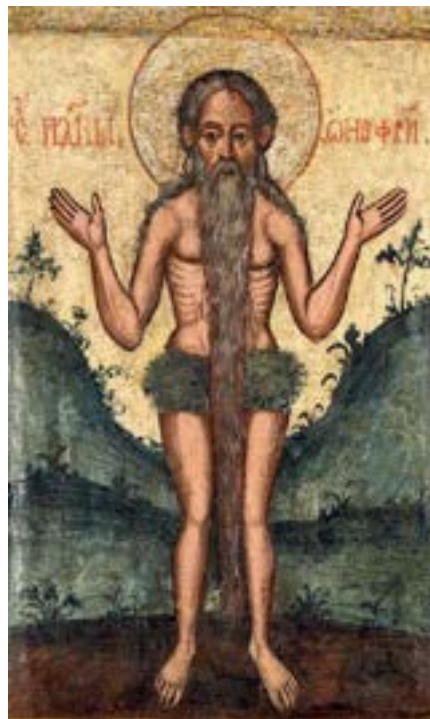
Mt 18:19-20

Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples about prayer: “But whenever you pray, go into your room” (Mt 6:6). Christ speaks here about the room of the human heart. The key to this “room” is concentration and attention, which must be maintained during prayer, without scattering one’s thoughts and without being distracted by ordinary cares. Prayer should not be wordy. The main thing is that prayer should be sincere and full of faith.

One of the most widely used ways to engage in Christian prayer is using the Psalms in prayer. Psalms are spiritual songs contained in Holy Scripture. They teach us to pray. Psalms are the basis of all the divine services of the Christian Church.

The Church has preserved and passed on to us many prayers that her faithful have prayed for centuries. Such prayers are collected in special books called prayer books. They are also a model for us and a resource in prayer. The best example is the Lord's Prayer — the *Our Father*.

The Church teaches that we need to have a prayer rule — to have a set time during the day we dedicate to prayer. This time is in the morning and evening, at certain periods of time during the day. One must learn to follow the prayer rule regularly and diligently. The full version of the prayer rule is contained in the *Horologion* (the *Chasoslov*). This book is truly a handbook of good, proper prayer.



The Venerable Onuphrii

The word “venerable” [Ukr. *prepodobnyi*] (remarkably similar) describes a person who has utterly perfected himself or herself by becoming like God. Often holy monks are referred to in this way. The apostle Paul describes the dynamics of becoming like God by calling us to strip off our “old self, the sinful person and to be clothed in the new self” (compare Col 3:9-10), the Prototype of which is Christ — the new Adam. The icons of saints, such as the Venerable Onuphrii, represent this dynamic:

we see a thin body, a very long beard, and at the same time, a young slender figure with raised hands in prayer. Everything indicates that this saint is bound for heaven.



Sometimes, when we pray using our own words rather than using the words of the ascetics as recorded in the *Horologion* (the *Chasoslov*), our prayers can be self-loving. However, we can also talk to the Lord using our own words, which we speak from the depths of our hearts. As our loving Father, he will always comfort, support, help, and bless us.

In prayer we can glorify God, we can thank him, we repent of our sins, or we can ask for something. The prayer of praise is the fruit of communion with God and the realization of his inexpressible greatness, his unspeakable goodness and mercy toward humankind. The prayer of thanksgiving (in Ukrainian, *blahodarennia*) is an expression of gratitude to God for all his gifts. Penitential prayers are a manifestation of a person's awareness of his or her sins and a desire to return to the heavenly Father. In our prayer-petition, we turn to God with our needs, as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us: "Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you" (Mt 7:7).



Liturgy at Saint George's Cathedral, Lviv

Chrystyna: Does the Lord always listen to our prayers?

Father Andrii: Sometimes it may seem that God does not listen to our prayers or petitions. But he always listens to us, although he does not immediately act on our petitions. We just need to be persistent in prayer, provided that we do not turn our petitions into demands. Prayer changes us, it makes us committed to what is good, it teaches us what we really need, and it helps us accept God's will: "Thy will be done." Indeed, only God knows what we really need (compare Lk 12:30). When we do not get what we ask for, this happens for our own good; and even if we do not understand this now, we will become aware of it in terms of our salvation. We must not dictate our will to God.



When we pray, we pray not for one but for all people, because we are all one people together ... Christ himself, the Teacher and Master of unity, who wanted that we should be united, wanted one to pray in this manner for all, as he himself brought them to the Father.

Cyprian of Carthage, On the Lord's Prayer



Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Saviour, save us. Through the prayers of your saints, O Saviour, save us.

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, Antiphons

Prayer can be communal and personal.

The Holy Spirit creates our prayer and inspires it. In prayer we glorify God, we thank him, we repent of our sins, and we ask for something.

Theme 3

Challenges in Prayer



Christ is tempted in the desert (Mt 4:1-11)



If you are heard praying, continue to give thanks [to God] in the prayer; if you are not heard, remain praying so that you may be heard.

John Chrysostom, *On Repentance*



If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Jn 15:7



Prayer transfigures the one who prays, makes them steadfast in doing good, teaches them about what they truly need, and makes them open to God's will.

Christ — Our Pascha, 821

Marichka: Why is it sometimes hard for me to pray?

Father Andrii: It often happens that we do not want to pray, that we are not ready to pray. But prayer should not depend on our mood. Prayer is a struggle. It is about applying yourself: through effort, patience, perseverance, and faithfulness. Through prayer, we maintain, develop, and cultivate a relationship with God. When we speak of this relationship only occasionally, it becomes weaker. That is why it can be difficult for us when we are about to pray.

The greatest challenge that we must overcome in the struggle to pray is our separation from God, which we inherited through the fall of Adam and Eve. By it we avoid contact with God, and even if we do have contact, it is hard for us to have a conversation with him.



Venerable John of Damascus



Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.

Is 65:24

Serhii: Sometimes I want to pray, but I do not know what to say to God.

Father Andrii: For many centuries, the Church, through her saints, has been enriched by wonderful prayers that teach us how to pray; they develop and enrich our personal prayer. Even if we are tired, if we have nothing to say, if we are annoyed or in a bad mood, printed prayers help us to pray.

However, it is very important to pray in your own words (spontaneous prayer). A sincere and direct petition to God in our own words should

enhance every one of our days. This is how we learn to pray throughout our lives.

Daryna: Why do my thoughts disintegrate during prayer? How do I deal with this?

Father Andrii: The state of our heart is especially important in prayer. It is good when we sincerely experience and consciously say every word of a prayer. However, in prayer we can become used to the text when we mechanically recite the words of a prayer and think of something completely different. That is why it is important for us to pay attention to ourselves, not to allow other thoughts to take over our mind during prayer. It is better to pray one prayer, but thoughtfully, repeating it several times, rather than to recite each prayer in a mechanical fashion.

Martyn: Sometimes prayer lasts so long...

Father Andrii: Prayer may seem too long when it is a simple reading of texts or standing during church services. Prayer is a necessity of the soul. When it becomes an obligation, it becomes a burden and comes across as too long. In addition, it all depends on how you relate to the Person with whom we are having a conversation. My friends, have you noticed that having a conversation with a friend or loved one does not seem long at all?



And we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

1 Jn 3:22



The vision of Saint Anthony the Great on the way to Paul of Thebes

The Venerable Anthony the Great is considered the father of monastic life in Egypt. His icon is based on the *Life*, written by the Saint Athanasius of Alexandria. Three episodes from this *Life* are shown on the icon, and therefore his figure is written three times. Anthony became praised for his victories over the demons who tempted him. They used to appear as monsters, beasts, and animals. A hypocentaur, a satyr, as well as hyenas and various creeping things are depicted on this icon. Anthony also protected Bishop Paul of Thebes from the heretics and healed a young maiden, who remained “outside” the mountain with Paphnutius, a monk and confessor of the faith. Living an ascetic life, Anthony lived 105 years. Feeling that death was approaching, he bid farewell to his brothers and peacefully departed to the Lord God.

Marichka: I often do not have enough time to pray...

Father Andrii: So long as our business, work, and pressures of daily life are more important to us than prayer, we will not have time for it. When we are too busy, we need to use the smallest moment to talk to God. And it does not matter where or when it happens: at home, on public transport, at work during breaks or at any other time. Brief and sincere prayer — talking to God — is very important and necessary.



God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have raised us from our beds and gathered us for this hour of prayer. Give us grace by the opening of our mouths and accept our thanksgivings, in the measure of our ability. Teach

us your statutes, because we do not know how to pray as we ought, unless you, Lord, guide us by your Holy Spirit.

The Order of Matins, Seventh Matins Prayer

Prayer is an indicator of our spiritual life.

Prayers written by the saints of the Church teach us how to pray, develop, and enrich our personal prayer.

You need to pray thoughtfully, with understanding and being conscious of the words of the particular prayer.

Our requests in prayer presume that we trust God and accept his will, whether we receive or do not receive what we ask for.

Theme 4

The Degrees of Personal Prayer



Jacob's Ladder (Gen 28:12-17)



I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also. I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also.

1 Cor 14:15



We pray with our lips, our mind, and our heart. Usually in the beginning, prayer is only verbal. But such prayer should be joined to the prayer of

mind and heart, aroused and upheld by verbal prayer.

Christ — Our Pascha, 690

Serhii: Why does the Church teach us to say certain prayers, to make the sign of the Cross, and to bow? Is it not possible to just pray privately, without anyone seeing it and knowing about it?

Father Andrii: A person is a whole individual. Therefore, when he or she prays, all his or her senses, strengths and abilities are also involved in this conversation with God. They distinguish various degrees of prayer: verbal (or bodily) prayer, prayer of the mind, prayer of the heart, and contemplation.

Through verbal prayer, or through the prayer of our mouth, we recite prayer texts. We accompany them with the posture of our body: by standing, folding our hands, including prayerful gestures such as bows, the sign of the Cross, and so on. This kind of prayer helps us to concentrate, to elevate our thoughts to God, and it also prepares us for deeper prayer — prayer of the mind.

Marichka: Why is it important to always be attentive during prayer?

Father Andrii: Internal watchfulness and awareness of God's presence protect us from evil thoughts and help us to focus on prayer. We meditate on the spoken words, we delve into their meaning and move accordingly to the second stage of prayer, in other words, the prayer of the mind. The prayer of the mind gives the supplicant an opportunity to sample and experience every word of his or her prayer.

When scattered thinking happens, the Holy Fathers and spiritual directors advise us to return to the place of prayer where our attention has been lost. You can also pray in shorter or simpler words, most of all sincerely.



Hanna Oleksiv made this rosary out of bread in the Mordovian camps



The Miracle of the Archangel Michael at Chonae

In the fourth century, in the Greek city of Colossae, that is in Phrygia, near the church, famous for its miracles, lived and struggled Archipus, who especially venerated the archangel Michael. Pagans tried to flood the temple by diverting the river. However, through the prayers of Archipus, the archangel Michael appeared, and with his spear he returned the river back to its earlier course. Many pagans converted afterwards, and the place was referred to as Chonae (from the Greek for hole or cleft), because the spear formed a cleft at the impact site. This miracle confirms the invincibility of the Christian Church, against which “the gates of Hades will not prevail” (see Mt 16:18).

Daryna: What does it mean to “pray with the heart?”

Father Andrii: The prayer of the heart, compared with the previous degrees of prayer, is that interior state of a person in which he or she is constantly present with God by the action of the Holy Spirit. When a person prays in his or her heart, he or she is no longer limited to words or gestures because his or her entire life, his or her every breath becomes a prayer. This is the degree of prayer to which the apostle Paul calls us, saying, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17). The prayer of the heart does not detach a person from reality and does not make him or her indifferent, but on the contrary, it changes his or her life for the better, bringing him or her tranquility and peace. One effective practice leading to the prayer of the heart is the Jesus Prayer, which aims, through simple words of talking to the Saviour, to instill a constant and living awareness of God’s presence in our hearts.

Dmytro: I have heard a lot about the Jesus Prayer. What is this prayer and why is it so popular?

Father Andrii: The Jesus Prayer is addressing the Saviour with the words, “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” It is recited often, by holding a rosary [in Ukrainian, *vervytsia*] (originating from Church Slavonic — a cord with beads or knots), with which they count the prayers completed. The intercessor recites a prayer using his or her mouth, then focuses on its words, and then his or her heart prays in the presence of God. Such a prayer leads to contemplation.



Since works of virtue and the keeping of commandments have a part in prayer, the person who prays ceaselessly is the one who integrates prayer with good works and noble actions with prayer.

Origen, *On Prayer*

Chrystyna: Father, what is contemplation?

Father Andrii: Contemplation is a gift from the Holy Spirit when God presents humankind the opportunity to see him “face to face” (1 Cor 13:12). This gift can be accepted by those who have cleansed their thoughts and reflections, and have completely trusted in God. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Mt 5:8).

A distinction is made between verbal prayer, prayer of the mind, and prayer of the heart.

The Jesus Prayer is one of the most effective, most impactful practices on the path to the prayer of the heart.

Contemplation is a gift from God in which a person meets God in prayer and remains in his presence.



Now at this very time, Lord, accept our prayers, and direct our lives in the ways of your commandments. Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, correct our thoughts, and make our knowledge whole and sober. Deliver us from every distress, evil, and pain.

The Prayer of the Hours



The Venerable Paraskeva of Epivates prays in Constantinople

In Church tradition, we know several holy women with the name Paraskeva, which derives from Greek meaning “Friday” and indicates their special dedication to the Passion of Christ. Paraskeva of Rome and Paraskeva of Iconium lived in the third and fourth centuries and were martyrs. But Paraskeva of Epivates, shown on the icon, was a hermit in the wilderness and lived in the tenth century. Prior to her death she visited Constantinople, the most important pilgrimage centre of the East.



Theme 5

The Church — the Place for Communal Prayer



The principal row of an iconostasis



My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise!

Ps 84:2-5

Serhii: Why does one have to go to church? Is it not possible to pray to God at home or in some other place?

Father Andrii: You can and should pray at home as well as in any other place. However, prayer in church is a prayer of the community of the faithful gathered in the name of Jesus Christ. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Mt 18:20) — so Christ teaches. The apostle Paul calls the assembled community a body headed by the Lord himself, and we are all members of his body (compare 1 Cor 12:12-30).

Now in the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament we read that Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and the other righteous people made altars to God (compare Gen. 13:4; 13:18; 22: 9; 28:16-22). After leaving Egypt, God commanded Moses to make a tabernacle (tent) of the Covenant in the wilderness. Then in the Promised Land, while in Jerusalem Solomon built a temple to God which became the meeting place of God with his people.

The New Testament describes how the early Christians gathered together in houses to pray and “break bread” according to the covenant of Jesus Christ (compare Lk 22:19). At the time of the persecutions, such gatherings took place at the tombs of martyrs. And when Christianity obtained its freedom, they began to build churches as special places of gathering for the Christian community.

The Christian church is the place where the church community gathers for prayer, to hear the Word of God, and to “break bread.”



In your temples we shall praise you, O Saviour of the world, and on our knees, we shall worship your invincible power. In the evening, in the morning, at midday, and at all times we shall bless you, O Lord.

Vespers at the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Stichira during the Lytia Service

Designs of classic types of churches:



1. Basilica



2. Rotunda



3. Cross-domed (Cross-in-square)



4. Octagonal



The foundational floor plan of Saint George's
Cathedral, Lviv

Martyn: Are there any rules about how Christian churches are built? Does it depend only on the desire of the community and the planning of the builders?

Father Andrii: Seeing as the church is the house of God, it is different from other buildings. In the Church there are certain canons (rules), according to which the Lord's church is built. A church is basically in the shape of a cross, keeping in mind that through the Cross the Saviour freed us from the power of the devil. Sometimes a church is based on the shape of a ship (an ark), because in Noah's ark humankind was rescued from destruction. A circle shape also appears — the sign of eternity.

A church building is usually crowned by a dome, which is the symbol for heaven. A Cross is installed on the dome as a sign of Jesus Christ's victory. There can be one or more domes — three, five, seven, nine, or thirteen. One dome symbolizes one God. Three domes symbolize the Most Holy Trinity. Five domes symbolize Jesus Christ and the four evangelists. A church with seven domes symbolizes the seven Holy Mysteries. Nine domes symbolize the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. Thirteen domes symbolize the twelve apostles and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Above the entrance to a church, and sometimes beside it, a bell tower (belfry) is built to call the faithful to prayer and to announce other important events.

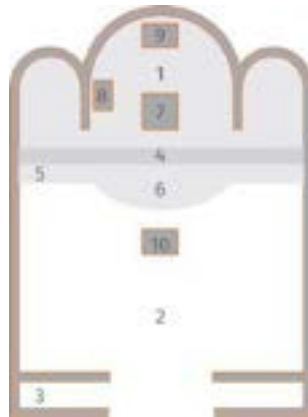
The inside of a church is divided into three parts — the narthex, the temple of the faithful, and the sanctuary.

Dmytro: What is a narthex? Why is it in church?

Father Andrii: After entering the church, we find ourselves in the narthex. Through the first centuries of Christianity, the catechumens stood in the narthex as they were preparing for the Holy Mystery of Baptism, along with the penitents who were forbidden to enter the temple of the faithful. The Order of Making a Catechumen prior to Baptism, the Order of Betrothal prior to the Crowning, and the Lytia Service are celebrated today in the narthex. The narthex also has a spiritual meaning, symbolizing the passage from the ordinary cares of this world — through repentance — to the kingdom of God.

Chrystyna: What is the temple of the faithful?

Father Andrii: The temple of the faithful is the central part of a church building. Its very name indicates that the faithful, in other words, the baptized, are present in it during the divine services. In the middle of the temple of the faithful, closer to the sanctuary, there is a tetrapod — a table on which a Cross and patronal icon or festal icon are placed, and next to them candles or lamps are placed. On the walls of the church are images of events in the history of salvation and of the saints, which symbolize the connection between the heavenly and earthly Church. The central church dome depicts the Almighty Lord (the *Pantocrator*), who blesses and cares for all creation. The temple of the faithful is a place where Christians hear the Word of God, partake of the Lord's Body and Blood, and participate in other divine services of the Church. Also, the Orders of Baptism, Chrismation, Marriage and other supplicatory prayers are celebrated in front of the tetrapod.



A church's floor plan

1. Sanctuary
2. Temple of the Faithful
3. Narthex
4. Iconostasis
5. Solea
6. Ambo
7. Holy Table
8. Proskomydia Table
9. High Place
10. Tetrapod



The temple of the faithful is the image of the fullness of the Church: the community gathers around Christ, her Head.

Christ — Our Pascha, 586

Daryna: I know that a distinct space of a church is comprised of the sanctuary. Why is that?

Father Andrii: The unique nature of a sanctuary is that at its centre is positioned a Holy Table — a sacrificial altar, on which the priest offers the Eucharistic Sacrifice. On the Holy Table, the priest places the Holy Gospel — the sign of the presence in the sanctuary of Jesus Christ — the Word of God.

There is also a special small table in the sanctuary, on which bread and wine, brought by the faithful, are prepared for the Divine Liturgy. This

small table is called the *Proskomydia* Table (from the word *proskomydia*, which means offering). Behind the Holy Table is the High Place — a special chair on which the bishop, who prefigures Christ the Teacher, sits during the celebration of divine services.



Christ the Teacher (the *Pantocrator*)

Jesus Christ is the central figure of Christian iconography. He is depicted in a red tunic and blue mantle. The red colour symbolizes divine nature, and blue colour symbolizes human nature, which God took on, as it were, “he clothed himself” in it. In the Gospel of John, Christ is mentioned as the Word of God that “became flesh.” In the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Word of the Father became human and, at the same time, the human word — the Good News. That is why Christ holds in his hands an open Gospel Book. Christ’s head is surrounded by a so-called “cross-in-halo,” which symbolizes the splendour of divine glory that is streaming from the face of Christ. The Cross, written onto the halo, indicates that the Crucifixion on the Cross was the moment of the greatest praise of Christ (compare Jn 12:20-33). The Greek word “Ο ΩΝ” (“I AM WHO I AM”), written onto the halo — this is the mysterious name of God, which was revealed to Moses (Ex 3:15). On the icon, this inscription of the name shows that Jesus Christ is the same God that spoke to the patriarchs and the prophets of the Old Testament. He is the Only-begotten Son of the Father, one in Being with him. Different Gospel texts can be conveyed in the open book of various icons, calling for us to imitate Christ, to receive his kingdom, to look for his coming and judgment.

Marichka: Why do they install an iconostasis in a church and what does it signify?

Father Andrii: An iconostasis is a kind of wall of icons that separates the sanctuary from the temple of the faithful and at the same time connects them with each other. It is a symbol of the connection between heaven and earth. There are certain rules formed by tradition, according to which iconostases are built.

There are three doors in an iconostasis: the Great (Royal) Doors and two side (Deacon's) Doors. The Royal Doors in the centre of the iconostasis symbolize the biblical "gates" to Paradise (heaven), "closed" to the people as a result of the fall of the first parents. By his Incarnation the Son of God opened them (that is why the Royal Doors are opened only from the side of the sanctuary). The opened "doors" to the kingdom are the Good News for humankind. It began with the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God and continued with the evangelists' proclamation (of the Gospel). For that reason, the icon of the Annunciation and the icons of the evangelists are featured on the Royal Doors.

To the right and left of the Royal Doors are the principal icons of the Saviour and of the Mother of God. They usually place the patronal icon, which depicts an event or a saint in whose honour the church is dedicated, on the right side of the principal row, immediately past the Deacon's Doors.

The iconostasis has several rows — the principal row (the principal icons, the patronal icon, the icon of Saint Nicholas), and above them — the row of feasts (the icons of the twelve major feasts of the liturgical year), the row of supplication (of the apostles), and the row of prophets. The iconostasis is crowned by the icon of the Crucifixion along with the Mother of God and John the Theologian standing on either side in supplication. At the bottom, under the principal row, there can be another row (the predellas) in which important events are presented from the Old Testament, from the Book of Acts or from the Lives of the Saints.

The raised space in front of the iconostasis is named the *solea*, the middle of which is a semicircular protrusion in front of the Royal Doors called the *ambo*. The Gospel is read from this spot, and the priest preaches his homily from here. From the *ambo* he gives the faithful Holy Communion.



Iconostasis

1. Principal Row
2. Predellas
3. Row of Feasts
4. Row of Supplication
5. Row of Prophets
6. Icon of Supplication (Deisis)
7. Crucifixion with those standing on either side in supplication
8. Mystical Supper
9. Royal Doors
10. Deacon's Doors
11. Principal Icon of Christ
12. Principal Icon of the Mother of God
13. Patronal Icon

The Christian temple [Ukr. *khram*] (from the Ukrainian word *khoromy*) is a place where the church community gathers for prayer and for the “breaking of bread.” A temple is also called a “church.”

This name comes from the Greek, *kyriake*, meaning the “house of the Lord.” Some churches are also called a “cathedral” — this name describes it as a meeting place of the church community led by a bishop.

The inside of a church is divided into three parts — the narthex, the temple of the faithful, and the sanctuary.

The temple of the faithful is the image of the fullness of the Church, with the Lord Jesus Christ himself standing as the Head.



The part behind the iconostasis where the Holy Table is found and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated is the image of heaven, whereas that part where the people stand is the image of the Church on earth. The iconostasis is, as it were, the doors to God’s eternal kingdom. On the iconostasis is gathered all that Jesus Christ gives to Christians in the Church, all that he did for them. On the icons is represented all that the Holy Church teaches people and the entire way along which she leads people to heaven.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, *Pastoral Letter to the Faithful of the Lviv and Kamianets Eparchies* — “About the Church”

Theme 6

The Holy Mysteries of Christian Initiation



The Mystery of Anointing with Holy Chrism



While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’

Mt. 26:26-28



Stop supposing that this visible myron is ordinary oil. For just as the bread of the Eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit is no longer bread, but the body of Christ, so also this *myron* is no longer ordinary, which is to say, common, after the invocation, but it is the gift of Christ and the Holy Spirit being accomplished by the coming of his divinity.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *The Mystagogical Catecheses*

Chrystyna: It is good to be in church, it is as if God is approaching you and you are approaching God. I thought that the first time we come to church is in our childhood, when we were not even totally aware of it. This happens when our parents bring us to church — to Holy Baptism.

Father Andrii: Indeed, Baptism is the first Mystery that a person receives to become a Christian. Along with Baptism, the Mystery of Anointing with Holy Myrrh (Chrism) is celebrated, at the same time the newly baptized person also receives Holy Communion — he or she participates in the Mystery of the Eucharist. These three Mysteries are called the Mysteries of Christian Initiation, because through them we become members of the Church, we receive the grace from God and enter into the life of the Most Holy Trinity.

Serhii: I was once present at a baptism. It seems to me that the most important moment was the immersion in water, right?

Father Andrii: Yes, of course. Immersion in water symbolizes our entry into the Death and Resurrection of Christ: we die to sin and are raised to eternal life. Here, the priest says the following words: “The servant of God (*the name of the baptized person*) is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” There are other important moments. Before baptism itself, the godparents, on behalf of the child, promise to serve Christ and proclaim the Symbol of Faith. As a sign of a person’s rebirth by the Holy Spirit, the priest anoints the child’s forehead, chest, shoulders, ears, hands, and feet.



The Mystery of Baptism



And unite us all, who share in this one bread and cup, with one another into the communion of the one Holy Spirit, and let none of us partake of the holy Body and Blood of your Christ unto judgement or condemnation. Instead, may we find mercy and grace with all the saints, who have been well-pleasing to you since time began...

Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. Anaphora

Chrystyna: I, too, saw that during baptism they clothe a baptized person in a white garment. What does this signify?

Father Andrii: The white cloth (known as the *kryzhmo*) symbolizes the one baptized being “clothed” in the risen Christ, in other words, it refers to the one baptized becoming a new person. The candle given to the newly baptized makes known that just as a candle gives light, so the one baptized must “shine” with faith and good works.

Martyn: Why do they baptize infants? Infants are not aware of what is happening to them.

Father Andrii: We baptize a child according to the faith of the parents who, as Christians, wish the child eternal life. However, godparents

represent the innocent child before God. They, in the name of the Church, take responsibility for the child's growth in the faith and participate in its upbringing.



The Mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist



On account of what are we Christians? Everyone would say, “On account of faith.” How are we saved? Clearly we are regenerated through the grace of baptism.

Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*



On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Acts 19:5

Marichka: Father, you said that Anointing with Holy Myrrh (Chrism) also takes place together with Baptism. And what is the meaning of this?

Father Andrii: Through Anointing with Holy Myrrh (Chrism), a Christian receives the Holy Spirit to become like our heavenly Father. The Holy Spirit transfigures a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions. So, the priest anoints with myrrh (chrism) the newly baptized's forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, ears, chest, hands and feet, saying these words: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Serhii: You mentioned about the Communion of the newly baptized. What does it add to the Baptism?

Father Andrii: Through Baptism the newly baptized is born to eternal life, through Anointing with Holy Myrrh (Chrism) — "it breathes by the Holy Spirit," and through the Eucharist — it receives the "food of eternal life," which Christ gives for his or her growth in the new life, in other words, divinization.

Daryna: How incomprehensible is the mystery of God's love for humankind! And why do we call it Eucharist?

Father Andrii: Eucharist means "thanksgiving" (gratitude). In it, Christ gives himself to us so that we can give ourselves to him and to our neighbours. That is why the Most Holy Eucharist manifests and creates our communion with God and with people equally, through it we become one body, in other words, the Church.



Participation in the life of the Most Holy Trinity becomes a reality for us through the Holy Mysteries of Baptism, Anointing with Holy Myrrh (Chrism), and Eucharist. In other words, we partake of God's life by being united to Christ, receiving the seal of the Holy Spirit, and sharing the Body and Blood of Christ in the community called Church. As a person after birth begins to breathe and then receives nourishment in order to live, so the newly baptized, born to new life in the baptismal font, begins to breathe by

the Holy Spirit and receives the nourishment of Holy Communion in order to grow in Christ. Through the prayers and sacred actions of the liturgical rite of each of these Mysteries, the Church leads the faithful (the Greek Fathers speak of *mystagogy* — *leading into the mystery*) into an understanding of the Mystery and perceiving it as a single, unified action of God's grace. This is why in the tradition of the Eastern Church, these three Holy Mysteries are celebrated together.

Christ — Our Pascha, 408



O Lord, send down your Most Holy Spirit on this myrrh and make it the anointing of kings, the anointing of spirit ... Make this myrrh through the descent of Your Holy Spirit.

The Order of the Sanctification of the Holy Great Myrrh (Chrism)

Baptism, Anointing with Holy Myrrh (Chrism), and the Eucharist — these are the Mysteries of Christian Initiation through which we become members of the Church, we receive the grace of God, and we enter into the life of the Most Holy Trinity.

In Baptism we become new people.

Through Anointing with Holy Myrrh (Chrism), the Holy Spirit transforms people, they become participants in the kingdom of God. The Eucharist is a gift for the divinization of humankind.

Theme 7

The Holy Mysteries of Healing



The Healing of a Paralyzed Man (Jn 5:1-15)



We entreat you, our God, to send your mercy upon this oil and upon those who are anointed with it in your name. May it bring about in them a healing of soul and body, and a cleansing and relief from all pain, from every sickness and weakness, and from every defilement of flesh and spirit.

Order of Anointing with Holy Oil, Prayer for the Sanctification of Oil



Holy oil as a sacred action and an image of divine mercy is given by God for the purification and sanctification of those who want to be freed from sins. Therefore, holy oil grants forgiveness of sins, heals diseases, and is used for sanctification.

Saint Symeon of Thessalonika, On the Divine Services and Mysteries of the Church

Chrystyna: Look at that long line of people waiting to go to Confession... Why are people so eager to go to Confession, and what does it give them?

Father Andrii: Human beings, because of their weakness, sometimes forget about God; they leave him and fall into sin. But God remembers them, never abandons them, and waits for their return. Alone they are not able to overcome weakness and break free from sinning. For this Christ provides human beings the opportunity to return to him. The Mysteries of Healing: Repentance and Anointing with Holy Oil offer this kind of opportunity.

Dmytro: What kind of healing is this?

Father Andrii: Sin, as a separation from God, is a disease, because it destroys a person's wholeness, in other words, the harmony of the body, soul, and spirit. Out of his love for people Christ grants them the grace of healing. By forgiving sins, he restores the harmony that was lost and can heal any physical ailments as he had done many times during his earthly life. We can receive this healing through our personal repentance.

Martyn: What does it mean to repent?

Father Andrii: This involves a change in one's thinking and life. From then on, a person redirects his or her life from sin to God. The Mystery of Repentance is about accepting God's love, realizing one's sins and confessing them, in other words, recognizing them. By the grace of this

Mystery, the Christian rises from his or her fall, becomes one with God, and is given the opportunity to grow in the virtues.



Confession happening on Maidan Square in Kyiv during the Revolution of Dignity

Serhii: Does this mean that for repentance I need to go to Confession?

Father Andrii: Yes, repentance is present in Confession. We confess to God in the presence of a priest who witnesses our repentance, helps us to strengthen ourselves in God's love, gives guidance, advice, including designating a penance, and then in the name of God forgives and absolves (loosens, frees) us from our sins.

Marichka: How should one prepare prior to Confession?

Father Andrii: Before Confession we make an examination of conscience, in other words, we compare our life with God's and the Church's Commandments; we pray for sincere repentance and the strength to make amends. It is important to be reconciled with specific people and make amends to them for any harm done. Then we go to Confession and confess our sins before a priest.



As a consequence of our first parents' fall, human will became weakened. The capacity to recognize and choose the good was also enfeebled. In their relations with God and neighbour and in their attitude towards themselves and their environment, human persons began to be guided not by love and self-giving but by an egotistic exploitation of the other for personal and consumeristic gain. A consequence of the Fall is the loss of every person's wholeness. This manifests itself in physical and spiritual suffering, in sickness and death.

Christ— Our Pascha, 447

Serhii: How does one confess properly?

Father Andrii: When we present ourselves for Confession, we confess the sins committed since the last Confession, then we receive the priest's guidance, penance, and absolution of our sins. We do penance after Confession, because its purpose is to repair the consequences of sin. When confessing sins, it is important to say everything that is a burden on our conscience and what we have done wrong. Sin cannot be withheld out of fear or shame, because then confession itself will not be to our advantage, but to our even greater detriment. The sins a person forgot to mention in Confession should be confessed at the next Confession.

Daryna: How often should we go to Confession?

Father Andrii: In Confession, in addition to the forgiveness of sins, we receive grace and the strength to resist temptations in our spiritual struggle. For this reason, it is important to go to Confession often. Good opportunities to go for Confession include the fasts of the Church, feasts, pilgrimages, and other events.



The Anointing with Holy Oil in the presence of a gathering



Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another...

Jas 5:13-16

Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.

Jn 20:22-23



One who confesses one's sins and accuses oneself of one's sins does it together with God.

Augustine of Hippo, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*

Martyn: Father, did you also mention the other Mystery of healing — Anointing with Holy Oil? Is it much like Repentance?

Father Andrii: The Holy Mystery of Anointing with Holy Oil is much like Repentance in that through it Christ gives the grace of healing of soul and body. During his earthly life, the Saviour repeatedly healed the sick. He also gave the apostles and their successors the authority to do the same. That is why the Church celebrates the Anointing with Holy Oil intended for the healing of soul and body and for the forgiveness of sins.

Chrystyna: How does this Mystery take place?

Father Andrii: The Anointing with Holy Oil is celebrated together with persons who are experiencing illness and suffering in order to strengthen their faith in Christ's victory over sin and death. It is celebrated using the prayer of the entire Church for the healing of soul and body, for the forgiveness of sins, and for physical healing. Even if a person does not recover physically, he or she receives spiritual healing. The grace of this Mystery helps a person who is experiencing illness to be able to face his or her sufferings and see Divine Providence in his or her illness.

The Anointing with Holy Oil is celebrated in a church or in a place where the ill person is staying. In this Mystery, the priest consecrates the oil and anoints the ill person with it. During the anointing, he turns to God as the physician of souls and bodies with a prayer for the healing of the sick. Readings from the *Epistle Book* and the *Gospel Book* during the celebration of this Mystery speak to us about the power of God and his love for his creation.



The Mystery of Anointing with Holy Oil



If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 Jn 1:8-9



May our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, by the grace and compassion of his love toward humankind, forgive you, my child, all your transgressions. And I, an unworthy priest, through his power given to me, forgive you and absolve you of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Order of Confession, Prayer of Absolution

This Mystery is also called the Anointing with Holy Oil Assembled in a Church or in a Home, because the whole Church prays gathered together with persons experiencing illness, according to the words of encouragement of the apostle James: “Pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective” (Jas 5:16). As a sign on this, seven priests administer the Anointing with Holy Oil. According to

Church custom, this Mystery is also celebrated in church during Great Lent together with all who require healing.

Christ gives every opportunity to become converted to him, but a person cannot always overcome weakness on his or her own.

Repentance is a change in one's thinking and life, redirecting one's life from sin to God.

The Mystery of Anointing with Holy Oil is a Mystery of healing, when those experiencing illness are given the grace to face their sufferings and see Divine Providence working in the course of their illness.

Confession requires:

- **making an examination of one's conscience;**
- **feeling sorrow for one's sins;**
- **deciding that one needs correction;**
- **confessing sins in the Order of Confession, and;**
- **doing the penance as determined by the confessor.**

Absolution is the forgiveness of sins.

Penance is when a person does certain penitential actions (for example, fasting, prayer, almsgiving, etc.). A confessor can impose a penance; it is a spiritual healing whose purpose is to repair the consequences of sin.

Theme 8

The Holy Mysteries of Service



The wedding at Cana in Galilee (Jn 2:1-11)



For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Eph 5:31-33

Serhii: Father, did you notice the crowns on the tetrapod? What are they for?

Father Andrii: These crowns are set out because a crowning will be taking place soon. The priest places them on the heads of the bride and groom during the wedding. They are important as a sign of both martyrdom and of royal dignity. Crowns are also a sign of the glory of married life, which is all about sacrificial service. The model for service is Christ himself, who came not to be served, but to serve. All Christians are called to serve God and one another in love. Nevertheless, the Church blesses the faithful for unique service in two of her Mysteries: Marriage and Priesthood.

Serhii: I thought that marriage is just for two people and has nothing to do with serving others.

Father Andrii: In the Holy Mystery of Marriage, a man and a woman, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, are united into “one body” and form a Christian family — the “domestic Church.” This is a new life of two individuals in Christ, so marriage is an icon of authentic service, of the relationship of the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

Marichka: Is that why marriage is a Mystery?

Father Andrii: Yes. Christ even by his presence at Cana in Galilee declared marriage honourable by blessing it. This means that marriage is not merely a union of a man and woman; God himself is present in it. As a result, this union is based on God’s love and love for one another.

Marichka: Father, tell us how the crowning happens.

Father Andrii: The Order of Crowning takes place in church. It is preceded by the Order of Betrothal in the narthex of a church, during which those intending to marry express their desire to get married. In recognition of this and as a symbol of the Lord’s power to strengthen it in love the priest puts the wedding rings on their right hands.

Then the priest leads the couple into the temple of the faithful, up to the tetrapod, where the Order of Crowning begins. During this Order, the

couple lay their hands on the Gospel Book and take the marriage vow of “loving, being true to, and honouring one another, and that they will be faithful to one another all the days of their lives.” The priest confirms this vow with the words, “What God has joined together, let no one separate.”

When the crowns are placed on the couple’s heads, the priest blessed them, saying: “Lord, our God, crown them with glory and honour.” This refers to the vocation of spouses to be co-creators with God in fatherhood and motherhood, welcoming offspring from him. Crowns also symbolize the victory of man and woman over passion and the subordination of sexuality to love in marriage. The Order concludes with a blessing in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, the icon of which the couple are called to be throughout their lives.



Do you yourself, O Master, stretch forth your hand from your holy dwelling place, and unite this servant of yours and this handmaid of yours. Unite them in oneness of mind, crown them for love, weave them into one flesh, grant them offspring and joy in their children.

Order of Crowning, Prayer before the Placement of Crowns



In the Holy Mysteries of Marriage and Holy Orders, the Christian receives the grace of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Church, the Body of Christ. In the Holy Mystery of Marriage, the Church blesses a man and woman called by Christ to create a “domestic church” — a Christian family. In the mystery of Holy Orders the Church, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, appoints men, called by Christ for the service of the community of the faithful to proclaim the Gospel, to be pastors for the People of God, and to sanctify them. The perfect model of service both in Matrimony and in Holy Orders is Christ, who “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28).

Christ — Our Pascha, 470

Martyn: Sacred ministers celebrate all the Mysteries. Why is this? And what is their service?

Father Andrii: As High Priest, Christ brought about the salvation of the world. The priest participates in this ministry of Christ, he is the bearer of Christ's priesthood. This gift of service is given by the grace of the Mystery of Priesthood, by which the priest preaches the Word of God, celebrates the Holy Mysteries and performs his pastoral service.

Dmytro: At the same time there are not only priests, but also deacons and bishops. What is the difference among them?

Father Andrii: Priestly service has various steps. Bishops, who are the successors of the apostles, are endowed with the fullness of Christ's priesthood. They appoint for service new bishops, priests, and deacons. Priests, in the name of their bishops, celebrate the divine services in the parishes entrusted to them, celebrate the Holy Mysteries, teach and serve the spiritual needs of the people. Deacons are appointed by bishops to assist priests in liturgical and charitable service for the community.

Daryna: How do they become sacred ministers?

Father Andrii: The Mystery of Priesthood is celebrated in church during the Divine Liturgy through the laying-on of hands by the bishop. The faithful also participate in the ordination, expressing their consent by singing "Axios!" ("He is worthy!").

Daryna: Who can receive this Mystery?

Father Andrii: Christ calls to Holy Orders, and the responsibility to be ready for this Mystery lies with the bishop who ordains the candidate. The candidate appropriately prepares for this Mystery through prayer and studies. A vocation is a gift from God, for this reason we pray for the gift of

vocation to the priesthood, as well as for the priests themselves, that they carry out their vocation worthily.



The archdeacon Stephen and hierarch Nicholas of Myra were filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to show, by their service and preaching, God's beauty, love and mercy to the world, and to continue the work of Christ's salvation.



I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Jn 10:11



The ordination of a priest



Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’”

Jn 20:21-23

The Mystery of Marriage is a man’s and woman’s new life in Christ. Marriage is an icon of authentic service and of the relationship of the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

Union in marriage is based on God’s love and on a man’s and woman’s love for one another.

In the Mystery of Priesthood, a candidate receives God’s gift to continue Christ’s work of salvation and to be the bearer of his priesthood.



O God, great in power and unsearchable in understanding, wondrous in counsel above all the children of humankind, yourself, O Lord, with the gifts of your Holy Spirit fill this man, whom you have been well-pleased to advance to the rank of presbyter, that he may be worthy to stand without blemish before your Holy Table, to proclaim the Gospel of your kingdom, to make holy the word of your truth, to offer gifts and spiritual sacrifices to you, and to renew your people through the water of rebirth, so that, when he meets the second coming of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, your Only-begotten Son, he may in your great goodness receive the reward of good stewardship according to his rank. For blessed and glorified is your most honoured and magnificent name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

Order for Ordaining a Priest



Most Reverend Volodymyr Sterniuk secretly ordains Father Bohuslav Hunkevych in his Lviv apartment in 1987

After his return from exile, Volodymyr Sterniuk, working at an ambulance station, discreetly carried on his pastoral ministry. Before long, remaining under scrutiny of the police the entire time, he became the leader of the underground Church. He used to ordain priests and coordinated pastoral activity in the Archeparchy of Lviv.



Therefore, appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord — humble, not avaricious men — men who are true and approved. For they also do the ministry of the prophets and teachers.

The Didache or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

From the beginning God in his Providence has planned this union of man and woman and has spoken of the two as one: male and female he created humankind.

John Chrysostom, *Commentary and Homily on the Epistle to the Ephesians*

Theme 9

Communal Prayer Time



Let it also be a rule for us, to praise God seven times a day.

Saint Basil the Great, *Homily on Asceticism*



Now, O Master, you have kept your promise, let your servant go in peace;
with my own eyes I have seen the salvation, which you have prepared in the

sight of every people — a light to reveal you to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

LK 2:29-32

Daryna: I know the priest's role is important in communal prayer. What exactly is that role?

Father Andrii: The priest presides over the communal prayer and represents the community of the faithful before God during the divine services in church. You probably know that the liturgical day, and therefore the divine services, in the Christian tradition begins in the evening, to commemorate the creation of the world as described in the Book of Genesis: "And there was evening and there was morning" (compare Gen 1).

Dmytro: And what are these divine services?

Father Andrii: The divine services begin with Vespers and span the entire day. After Vespers we pray the Compline, the Midnight Office, Matins, and the Hours: the First, the Third, the Sixth, and the Ninth, as well as the Order of the Typical Psalms, or *Obidnytsia* [Service of the Refectory].

The texts, or the Orders, of the divine services are found in a book called the *Horologion* (the *Chasoslov*). The Divine Liturgy is the high point of all the divine services.

Chrystyna: In addition to the Divine Liturgy, Vespers and Matins are celebrated in our parish.

Martyn: But I have never been to a Vespers or a Matins service. Can you talk a little bit about them? And is it important to participate in them?

Father Andrii: Yes, certainly. Vespers and Matins prepare us the best for participation in the Divine Liturgy. These and the other divine services of

the *Horologion* (the *Chasoslov*) are served every day. If this is not possible, then Vespers is celebrated at least on Saturday evenings and before major church feasts. And Matins is celebrated on Sunday mornings or on the day of a feast.



In the Divine Services, the Church makes memorial of the saving Mysteries of Jesus Christ. And while the Pascha of Christ persists in transient time, the divine worship of the Church exists in three cycles. These correspond to the three units of time — the daily, the weekly, the yearly.

Christ — Our Pascha, 537

Daryna: I really like Vespers, although I do not understand everything in it.

Father Andrii: At the beginning of Vespers, we remember that God created the world as we sing Psalm 103. Remembering the fall of our first parents, we pray the Psalms in which we express repentance and ask forgiveness for our sins. Christ enters into the spiritual darkness caused by our sins — “Tranquil Light.” Then we sing the hymn “Make us worthy, O Lord,” in which we ask God to protect us from sin. Vespers ends with the Song of the Righteous Symeon, “Now, O Master,” the words of which we express the joy of salvation in Christ.

Serhii: And I saw how the priest blessed bread, wheat, wine, and oil at Vespers. Why is that?

Father Andrii: This part of Vespers is called the Lytia Service; they celebrate it on major feasts. Usually during a Vigil Service or after a Liturgy on a feast, we consume the bread and wine blessed at the Lytia Service, and the priest anoints us with oil to signal our belonging to the community of the faithful and for physical and spiritual reinforcement. For this reason, I encourage you to participate in Vespers as often as possible.



Having seen the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless One. We worship your Cross, O Christ, and we praise and glorify your holy Resurrection. For you are our God, we know no other than you, we name you by name. Come, all you faithful, let us worship the holy Resurrection of Christ, for behold, through the Cross joy has come to the whole world. While always blessing the Lord, we praise his Resurrection. For having endured crucifixion, he has destroyed death by death.

Resurrection Matins, Hymn after the Gospel

Serhii: And what is so special about Matins?

Father Andrii: At Matins we praise the victory of light over darkness — of Christ over sin and death — in the hymn: “The Lord is God and has appeared to us.” During Sunday Matins we sing the following hymns: “The assembly of angels” and “Having seen the Resurrection of Christ.” In the hymns of the Canon, we recall the story of salvation from the chosen people’s exodus from Egypt to the Annunciation of the Most Pure Virgin Mary, and with the triumphant hymn “Glory to God in the highest” we witness our participation in this victory and our hope of being in the light of God’s glory.

Marichka: Father Andrii, I was not aware that Vespers and Matins are so meaningful and important for us!

Father Andrii: And not only Vespers and Matins, but also the other divine services of the *Horologion* (the *Chasoslov*). Thanks to them, Christians embrace the gift of constant communion with God and the gift of enrichment in the knowledge of God.



Lytia Service

Chrystyna: But the most important divine service is the Divine Liturgy, right?

Father Andrii: Yes, Chrystyna. The Divine Liturgy is the culmination of Christian prayer. It is at the Divine Liturgy that we are united to God and to one another through the table of the Word and of the Eucharist.

Dmytro: Father, then tell us more about the Divine Liturgy and its meaning.

Father Andrii: Of course, I will. But we will dedicate our next conversation to this question.



Tranquil light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father, O Jesus Christ: as we come upon the sunset, as we see the evening light, we sing to God — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. At all

times you are worthy of being hymned by joyful voices, O Son of God, you are the giver of life, for this the whole world glorifies you.

Vespers, Hymn

Vespers is the glorification of God for his creation and the expression of the joy of our salvation.

Matins announces the victory of light over darkness, the victory of Christ over sin and death.

The Divine Liturgy is culmination of Christian prayer.

Theme 10

The Order of the Divine Liturgy



The Mystical Supper



Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.

Jn 6:53-54

Martyn: Father Andrii, as you promised us, tell us more about the Divine Liturgy.

Father Andrii: In our tradition there are different Orders of the Liturgy: the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. The Divine Liturgy consists of the *Proskomydia*, the Liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Sacrifice. All the faithful, led by a priest, celebrate it. The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is usually celebrated. The Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is

celebrated ten times throughout the liturgical year. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated during Great Lent.



The summit of the Church's liturgical life is the Divine Liturgy ... the service of God to his people and of God's people to him. In the Divine Liturgy the Father leads us into the fullness of his life by giving us his Son. The Son then gives himself to us as nourishment, in the banquet of the Word, and in the banquet of the Body and Blood. He does so in order that we might become "one body and blood" with him and partake of his Divinity.

Christ — Our Pascha, 344



Let us approach Communion with a burning love so that the fire of love may consume our sins and enlighten our hearts, and so that by this communion of the divine fire we ourselves may be set afire and deified.

John of Damascus, The Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith

Serhii: And why does a priest vest in such distinctive clothing?

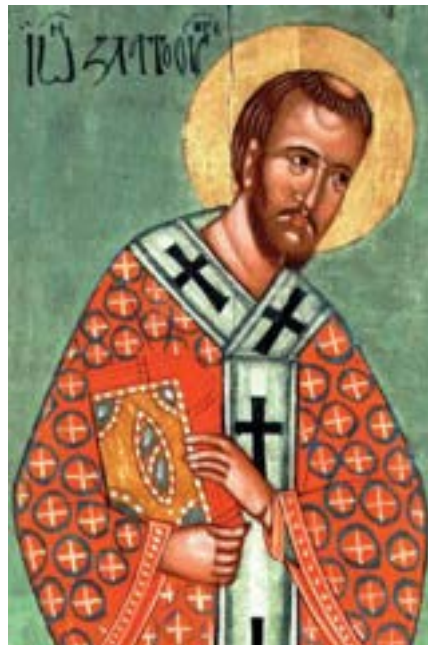
Father Andrii: Yes, this is indeed specialized clothing to be used during the divine services. We are not accustomed to their Greek names: sticharion, epitrachelion, phelonion. This clothing, (or, in Church language, these vestments), emphasize the solemnity and holiness of the Liturgy. Objects used in the divine services have the same importance: the chalice, the diskos along with the books used in the divine services — the *Epistle Book*, the *Gospel Book*, and the *Liturgikon*.

Marichka: Father, the name *Proskomydia* is also not common. What does it mean?

Father Andrii: *Proskomydia* is a word of Greek origin meaning “offering.” We bring with us gifts — bread and wine, and the priest prepares them for the Liturgy. To do this, he cuts out the “Lamb” from the bread called a “prosphora,” as well as other particles. The Lamb symbolizes Jesus Christ, and the particles symbolize the Most Holy Mother of God, the angels and saints, and people both living and dead. The faithful partake of the consecrated particles during the Liturgy.

Chrystyna: And tell us more about the Liturgy of the Word.

Father Andrii: The Liturgy of the Word begins with the exclamation: “Blessed be the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” We enter this kingdom by asking the Lord in the litanies for help with our difficulties. The sacred minister announces the petitions of the faithful, and the faithful respond with the words, “Lord, have mercy” or “Grant this, O Lord.” The faithful confirm the priest’s prayer with the biblical “Amen!” which means “Let it be so!”



Hierarch John Chrysostom

Dmytro: Father, from your words I understood that we are also active participants in the Divine Liturgy.

Father Andrii: Yes, without a doubt! The whole Liturgy is a dialogue: God communicates with us, and we communicate with him. This is obviously reflected in the choir's antiphonal singing, that is to say, when the choir is singing in alternating ways. Antiphons are based on Old Testament texts and guide the faithful to listen to the Word of God in the New Testament. After the singing of "Holy God," the Epistle reading is read, and then the priest solemnly brings the Gospel Book to the ambo for its proclamation.

Daryna: Father Andrii, why is the reading from the *Gospel* called the "the table of the Word"?

Father Andrii: The Word of God is spiritual nourishment for each of us, for this reason we call this gift from God the table of the Word. This consists of the liturgical readings from the *Epistle Book* and the *Gospel Book*. Indeed, Christ himself speaks to us in the reading of the Word of God. We receive this Word following the example of the Most Holy Mother of God, who treasured every word of the Son of God in her heart. In his homily, the priest explains the Word of God to us and points out its relevance in our daily lives.



Then believe that today that very Supper is being prepared, in which he himself took part. They are no different from each other. One cannot say that a human being prepared this supper and Christ prepared that supper; on the contrary, this and that Supper he himself prepared and is now preparing.

John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Holy Evangelist Matthew*



Daryna: Father Andrii, and yet is the table of the Eucharist at the centre of the Divine Liturgy?

Father Andrii: Yes, it really is. The table of the Word prepares us for the table of the Eucharist. As the Cherubic hymn is being sung, the Liturgy of the Sacrifice begins with the transfer of the Gifts to the Holy Table, on which Christ sacrifices himself in a bloodless way for the salvation of the world. That is why the priest even calls on the faithful: “Let us stand well, let us stand with fear, let us be attentive to offer in peace the holy oblation.” The centre of the oblation (in Greek — of the *Anaphora*) is the Eucharist: the Holy Spirit sanctifies us and makes the bread and wine to be the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We remember with thanksgiving the Most Holy Mother of God, the saints, the church hierarchy, and all the faithful living and deceased.

Marichka: Father, the Liturgy of the Sacrifice ends with the Communion of the faithful. Should everyone receive Communion?

Father Andrii: As every person needs daily bread, so every Christian needs heavenly bread. We should prepare ourselves through confession prior to receiving Holy Communion if we have committed a sin, by fasting too, which helps us to open ourselves to receive Christ. Sanctified by the Holy Spirit, we confidently turn to God, *Our Father*, that he give us “our daily bread,” in other words, Holy Communion. Strengthened by the Bread

from heaven, we are ready to “go forth in peace” to continue serving God and our neighbour in the world.

The priest blesses us for this ministry with the words, “The blessing of the Lord be upon you with his grace and love for mankind....” We affirm this blessing with the word “Amen.”



The hierarch Basil the Great



Make the pure light of your divine knowledge shine in our hearts, O loving Master. Open the eyes of our minds that we may understand the message of your Gospel...

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, Prayer Before the Reading of the Gospel

The heart of the Divine Liturgy is the celebration of the Eucharist and consuming the Body and Blood of Christ is the guide to eternity and its foretaste.

Sacred ministers and the lay persons take an active part in the Divine Liturgy; the Liturgy unites them all in the Universal Church — the Body of Christ.

In our tradition there are different Orders of the Liturgy: the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

Theme 11

Other Important Supplicatory Prayers



The Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Mother of God



O Mother worthy of all praise, you gave birth to the Word who is holiest of all who are holy. Accept this offering now, deliver us from every calamity,

and rescue from future torment those who sing for your sake: Alleluia!

Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Mother of God, Kontakion 13



First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone.

1 Tim 2:1

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer.

1 Tim 4:4-5

Marichka: In addition to the Divine Liturgy, Vespers and Matins, I was present in church for other divine services too. My favourites are Prayer Services (*Molebens*) and Akathist Hymns.

Father Andrii: There are supplicatory prayers that do not belong to the daily cycle of prayers. These are Prayer Services (*Molebens*), Akathist Hymns, and others. They are characterized as paraliturgical.

The **Prayer Service (*Moleben*)** is a prayer of thanksgiving or a supplicatory prayer, through which we appeal to Christ, the Mother of God, or the saints. In our prayers, we ask for intercession or help, or we thank God for the graces that we have received.

The **Akathist Hymn** is a prayer of glorification of Christ, of the Mother of God, and of the saints. We can pray both the Prayer Services (*Molebens*) and Akathist Hymns as a group, in church, or privately.

Serhii: I once watched a priest sanctify an automobile. What does this mean?

Martyn: And not only an automobile but other things as well. Why make objects holy?

Father Andrii: Various blessings and sanctifications are also familiar supplicatory prayers. Their texts are contained in a liturgical book called the *Book of Needs* (the *Trebnyk*), because it contains prayers for various needs. In the prayers of blessing, the faithful ask for God's help in their daily life. In prayers for the sanctification of objects, they ask for divine grace to use them for the good and assistance of men and women. By sanctifying churches and objects belonging to a church (chalices, icons, divine service-books, etc.), Christians dedicate them exclusively for use during the divine services. The ordination of persons is carried out for a specific ministry in the Church: candle-bearer, reader, cantor or subdeacon. There are also offices for the consecration of persons to the monastic life; by their lives they already manifest the kingdom of God to which we are heading.



The Office of Consecration to the Monastic Life



Fashioner and Creator of the human race, Bestower of spiritual grace, Giver of eternal salvation, yourself, O Lord, send your Holy Spirit with blessing from above upon this (*he names the object*). Armed with the power of heavenly protection, may it promote physical and spiritual safety, defense and help for all who are to make use of it. For you bless and sanctify all things, and we give glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever.

Prayer for the Sanctification of Any Object

Marichka: All these prayers concern living people. But we also pray for the dead. Why?

Father Andrii: Our holy Church prays not only for the living but also for the dead. The reason to pray for the deceased is the event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ who “trampled death by death and to those in the tombs giving life” (the Paschal troparion). We refer to the dead as those who have fallen asleep, because the death of a Christian is like falling asleep, after which an awakening to a new life occurs. We ask our merciful God that those who have fallen asleep may be made worthy to stand at the right hand of the Judge — Jesus Christ — and may they find rest with the saints. After a Christian dies, we guide him or her with our prayers to eternal life. The prayers of the Order of Burial are full of hope in the resurrection. The Church prays for those who have fallen asleep during the Divine Liturgy. Saturdays and specific days of the liturgical year are also dedicated to the commemoration of the dead.

Dmytro: Father, I watched a film in which a priest cast the devil out of a person. During this he was praying. Are there really such prayers in the Church?

Father Andrii: Yes, these prayers are found in the Order of Exorcism — the freeing of a person from demonic possession. A priest, distinguished for his spiritual life and virtues, can perform this, after having received his bishop’s blessing for this.

Marichka: Why can the devil become a person’s master?

Father Andrii: The devil is the enemy of humankind’s salvation and, as a result, wants to subjugate it. If humankind does not repent of its sins, then it becomes more and more dependent on these sins and the devil right behind them. Eventually, this dependence can grow into a demonic possession — the devil becoming the absolute master of humankind’s will. But since the devil can never erase the image of God in humankind, humankind can always be freed from the power of the devil. The grace of God frees humankind from the devil and gives it salvation.



Special occasional prayers or a “need”, — are an entreaty to God, to the Virgin Mother of God, or to the saints for care, protection, or intercession. They can be for either the ecclesial community or individuals. In these prayers the Church, like a compassionate Mother caring for her children, whether living or deceased, prays for their salvation. Through these prayers of the Church our vocation to sanctify every aspect of our life — that is, to fill it with the memory of God’s presence in all — is realized.

Christ — Our Pascha, 500



The hierarch Nicholas casts out a demon from a possessed person

Prayer Services (*Molebens*) and Akathist Hymns are prayerful interactions with individuals whose help we ask.

In praying for those who have fallen asleep, we ask God that they, having found rest with the saints, may be worthy to stand at the right hand of Jesus Christ.

By blessing objects, we ask God for the grace to use them for good. God’s grace gives salvation and delivers humankind from all evil.



A person does not bless, but God blesses a person with his hand and with words.

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*

Theme 12

Family Prayer, Family Rituals



A family Holy Supper [Ukr. *Sviatvechir*]



The communal prayer of the entire family is the best school of piety for children. Parents, therefore, give them a good Christian example and teach them how to pray well.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, *Pastoral Letter "On Marriage and Family"*



We give you thanks, O Christ our God, for you have satisfied us with your earthly good things. Do not deprive us of your heavenly kingdom, but as

you came into the midst of your disciples, O Saviour, granting them peace, so also come to us and save us.

Prayer After a Noon Meal

Daryna: Father, can we pray some prayers together with family, with relatives?

Father Andrii: Yes, of course. In addition to praying in church, Christians pray together at home as well. After all, the family is the “domestic Church,” a small community that is prayerfully united to the large community — the Church. Consequently, communal prayer within the family reflects our belonging to the Church.

Marichka: I remember when I was still a little child we prayed together with our parents. But later we stopped praying together.

Father Andrii: It is very important to preserve the valuable tradition of communal prayer. Sometimes it is difficult to gather for prayer: everyone is affected by different matters at different times. However, one should try to find time for communal prayer, at least once a day.

Daryna: Sometimes in our family we read or discuss an interesting book on spirituality.

Father Andrii: This is good. These kinds of shared discussions help a family to grow spiritually, learn to live in community, and recognize the needs of others. Our people traditionally read the *Lives of Saints*. For they give specific examples of Christian approaches to various problems in life, which often surface before our eyes. Religious films are very good for family viewing — they expand our spiritual horizons. What book on spirituality is the most precious, do you think?



Patriarch Jacob blesses the sons of Joseph (Gen 48:8-22)



A Christian family's home is the place where members of the family share with God and among themselves the intimacy of love. The family is a community of love, which Saint Paul often calls the domestic church (compare Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15). In this community, the husband and wife, the parents and children, liturgize: they render worship to God by serving one another. It is in the home that a person obtains his or her principal spiritual inheritance: knowledge of God, and respect for parents, the family hearth, the Church, and the earthly homeland.

Christ — Our Pascha, 654

Chrystyna: I'm guessing, Holy Scripture?

Father Andrii: It really is. Holy Scripture differs from other books in that God himself speaks to us through the people and situations described there. In the places where people live, a separate space is very often made for icons and Holy Scripture, which we call an icon corner. As a building must rest on a cornerstone, so our life must be built on the Lord, for he is the

cornerstone for us — whether in an image or in the Word. For this reason, Holy Scripture ought to be read every day, either together with family or alone.

Dmytro: Are there any other family Christian customs?

Father Andrii: Definitely. You already know about them and enjoy taking part in them. For example, these centre on the Eve of the Nativity [Ukr. *Sviatvechir*], the Eve of the Theophany [Ukr. *Shchedryi Vechir*], and the Paschal breakfast, when we gather with family and eat our festive meal. In this way, we discover the holiness of family as a community with God and among ourselves. Communal prayer and a common meal represent the family liturgy, which has as its source prayer and the banquet of the Divine Liturgy.

Serhii: I saw how parents were blessing their children at their wedding. I know this is a common custom. Is it proper?

Father Andrii: The parental blessing of children expresses the blessing of God, by the grace of which children came into the world and are now creating a family. By asking for blessings before important events in life: study, military service, or choices around his or her status in life, a person expresses hope that God will support him or her throughout the rest of his or her life. By blessing their children, parents are aware that the children are leaving them, and therefore they entrust their children to the care of God. After all, their children are at the same time children of God.



Let the whole family — father, mother, children, and extended family — pray together on a daily basis, if possible, in the morning and in the evening, before and after dinner, and when it is too difficult, then at least in the evening.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, *Pastoral Letter to the Clergy and Faithful of the Eparchy of Stanyslaviv* — “*The Christian Family*”



Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

Mt 18:19-20

Communal prayer and reading Holy Scripture in the family, the “small” Church, is a testimony of our belonging to the “big” Church.

The parental blessing of children expresses God’s blessing and the entrusting of children to the care of God.



Theme 13

The Christian Feast



A pilgrimage taking place in Zarvanytsia



We are not so holy as those in heaven, or those in purgatory. They are certain of eternal salvation, and we are not yet certain. Nevertheless, we are saints, because we are participants in that holy life of grace, which is common to them and to us. We are saints as long as we are connected to them in that holy community, of which Christ is the head.

Andrei Sheptytskyi, *Pastoral Letter to the Faithful* — “*The Truths of Faith*”

Daryna: In the Church calendar I see that every day has some feast or several feasts. Why do Christians celebrate so many feasts?

Father Andrii: The Church keeps alive the memory of the holy events and works of salvation that took place in the past. These can be events from the life of Jesus Christ, of the Most Holy Mother of God, and of individual saints. When we are celebrating, these events of the past become relevant to us. And so, by participating in the divine services of the feasts, we become partakers of these saving events, and we become filled with the grace of salvation. The Christian feast we celebrate here on earth becomes a foretaste of the joy of heaven.

Serhii: What feast is considered the greatest?

Father Andrii: Christ's Pascha is the most important Christian feast. From it they prompt a countdown of the dates of the other feasts of the movable cycle (those that are celebrated every year on a different day). These include such great feasts as the Lord's Entry into Jerusalem, the Lord's Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

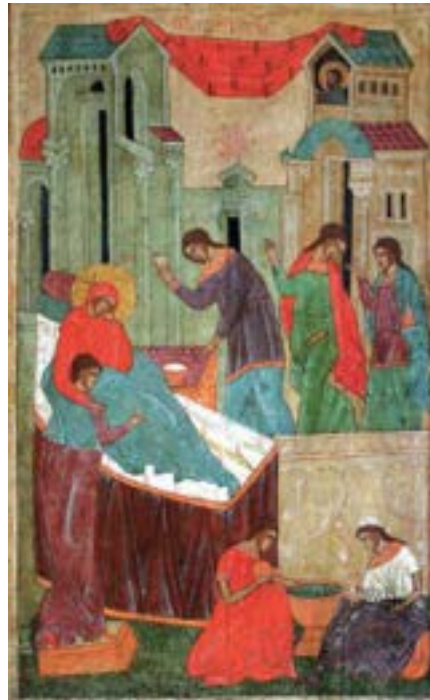
Every Christian feast is an expression of spiritual joy through the salvation given to us in Jesus Christ. For this reason, the foundation, the content and the fulfilment of every Christian feast is the Person of the risen Christ. Jesus Christ's Resurrection transforms, enlightens, and sanctifies all time, all history and the whole world. It is a transition from what is temporary to what has no end, from death to eternal life. After the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we all live in a new time — in a resurrected life, as a result, all of time becomes one Christian feast.

Marichka: What are the other important Christian feasts?

Father Andrii: All feasts of the Church are divided into those pertaining to the Lord, the Mother of God, and the saints — in keeping with the theme of the celebration. On the feasts of the Lord, the Church especially glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ pertaining to the most important events of his earthly life for our salvation. The feasts of the Mother of God are established in honour of the Most Holy Mother of God. On saints' feast days, we honour those who pleased God, whom the Lord glorified for serving him.

The greatest feast is Christ's Pascha. In addition, there are twelve major feasts: The Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God, The Exaltation of the

Precious Cross, The Entrance into the Temple of the Most Holy Mother of God, The Nativity of Christ, The Theophany, The Encounter of Our Lord, The Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God, The Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem, The Ascension of Our Lord, Pentecost, The Transfiguration of Our Lord, and The Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God.



The Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God

The Church year begins with the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God. The birth of a girl is a blessing from God for her parents who were waiting their entire lives for a child and had been experiencing childlessness. A midwife is taking care of Anna reclining on her bed indicative of her advanced age. From afar, from the window of a house, Joachim contemplates what is taking place. But the child, whose birth “has made joy known to all the world” (the festal troparion), is depicted unnoticed in the lower right corner of the icon. This is the way the iconographer draws attention to Mary’s humility and humbleness. Three virgins bringing their gifts come to greet the woman giving birth. One of them (the central figure) brings the star — the harbinger of the forthcoming star of Bethlehem of Christ’s Nativity.



This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Ps 118:24

Chrystyna: Why do we celebrate the memory of the saints?

Father Andrii: All Christians are called to holiness. We honour those whom God has glorified and whom the Church has recognized as saints: apostles, martyrs, venerables, and hierarchs. The Church celebrates the memory of a saint mainly on the day of his or her death, which is the day of his or her birth to eternal life.

Celebrating the memory of the saints shows us that Christ acts in every person who has received the Mystery of Baptism. We also glorify God's remarkable work in human life. For this reason, we need to learn more about the lives of the saints, of their Christian struggle. Saints are a good example of Christian living for every contemporary Christian.

Martyn: How does one celebrate a Christian feast day properly?

Father Andrii: We start celebrating in the evening by participating in Vespers and Matins, and on the very day of the feast we partake of the grace of the feast at the Divine Liturgy and approach to receive Holy Communion. Then we share the joy of the feast with family and friends at a common festal banquet.



The Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God

As we begin the Church year with the feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God, so the year ends with the feast of her Dormition. We have an exemplary history of human salvation — from birth to death. Mary’s death was effortless much like falling asleep, hence the name “Dormition.” Inasmuch as the death of this righteous person is her birth destined for heaven, then Christ himself descends upon her bed of death and receives her soul which has separated itself from her body, depicted in the form of a newborn infant. Then he again unites her soul to her body, placing her in Paradise. The apostles accompany her body on earth, but in Paradise the angels and the righteous of the Old Testament are waiting for her. In the foreground of the icon is Athonius, a Jew. According to tradition, he tried to overturn the catafalque of the Most Holy Mother of God, and he had the wrists of both hands cut off. This is a warning to everyone who is going to disrespect this holy relic. Athonius repented and was healed — this was the first miracle that occurred through the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God, who “in falling asleep did not abandon the world” (the festal troparion).

The Christian feast is a foretaste of the joy of heaven.

The life of the saints is an example of true Christian life.

Participating in the divine services is the best way to celebrate a Christian feast.



The liturgical year is joined to the astronomical year in such a way that the year is crowned with the goodness of God. This is accomplished by commemorating, rendering present, and experiencing all the major events of salvation history in the divine services.

Christ — Our Pascha, 565



Let the heavens fittingly be glad, and let the earth rejoice. Let the whole world, visible and invisible, celebrate the feast. For Christ is risen — our eternal joy.

Paschal Canon at Resurrection Matins, Ode 1

Theme 14

Fasting and Almsgiving



The Exaltation of the Precious Cross



Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

2 Cor 9:7-8



Wondrous indeed is the weapon of prayer and fasting. To Moses it revealed the Law, and as a sacrifice it inflamed the zeal of Elias. By keeping it we faithfully cry out to the Saviour: Against you alone have we sinned, have mercy on us.

Vespers of the Second Sunday of the Great Fast, Aposticha

Father Andrii: Christian feasts remind us of events that are important for our salvation and lead to a deeper knowledge of God. In view of this, the Church has established fasts as a special preparation before feasts. Fasting is a time of intense prayer and repentance, critical rethinking and change in one's life. Consequently, fasting is established by the Church for a Christian's greater good. What fasts do you know?

Chrystyna: I know Great Lent before Pascha — the feast of the Lord's Resurrection.

Daryna: And I know that there is a fast before Christ's Nativity. And in the summer, there is a fast before the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God.

Father Andrii: Yes. The fast before Pascha is called Great Lent. It has no fixed dates but lasts from Cheesefare Sunday to Pascha. There are also fasts before the feast of the Nativity of Christ (Ukr. *Pylypivka*), before the feast of the holy apostles Peter and Paul (Ukr. *Petrivka*), and before the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God (Ukr. *Spasivka*). Besides these, there are single day fasts. Do you know when?

Daryna: On the Nativity and Theophany Eves, our family has a tradition during these days of not eating anything until evening. There is also a fast on the feast of the Exaltation of the Lord's Cross and the Beheading of John the Baptist. In addition to this, throughout the year, Friday is a day to fast, in memory of the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father Andrii: During the fasts we limit ourselves in food consumption. However, fasts are not only limited to this.



You are not eating flesh meat, are you? You should not eat debauchery with your eyes as well. Let your hearing also fast. The fast of hearing is not to accept bad talk against others and sly defamations. Your mouth should also fast from foul language and telling lies about others. ... For what good is it if we do not eat poultry and fish, and yet we bite and devour our brothers and sisters?

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues*



From the moment of one's Baptism, every Christian enters into spiritual combat. There we die to sin, in order to live for God. This battle, as the apostle Paul teaches, is not about wrestling "against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). The Christian engages in spiritual warfare by being armed with prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; we thus cleanse our thoughts and achieving dispassion.

Christ — *Our Pascha*, 785

Martyn: Then what is fasting? I always thought that fasting was abstinence from food.

Father Andrii: Fasting is not only specific restrictions in food, but, most of all, a struggle against passions. Therefore, the whole person should fast: fasting should include both a person's body and soul. For restraint in food itself does not benefit a person if he or she does not refrain from anger, slandering, or other sinful inclinations. In addition, the importance of fasting is that we, as we save on food, acquire the means to give alms to those in need. Fasting and almsgiving combined with prayer help a Christian in the spiritual struggle and lead him or her to perfection.

Chrystyna: Prayer is truly necessary in our lives. And why is almsgiving important? And why are these three things — prayer, fasting and almsgiving — related?

Father Andrii: Prayer unites us with God, through fasting we cleanse ourselves of passions and move towards the virtues, and through almsgiving we unite with our neighbours and create a community of love in which God dwells. Almsgiving is an expression of love for one's neighbour, just as God was the first to show mercy to humankind.



But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Mt 6:17-18

Dmytro: And in what is almsgiving itself apparent?

Father Andrii: Almsgiving is about giving help to those in need. Help can be both material things and a good word, support, and consolation. We must do every good work not for praise, but for the love of God and neighbour. Therefore, if one is not able to show almsgiving in material things, he or she can always do spiritual almsgiving. By fasting we care about the good of our soul, and by almsgiving we care about the good of our neighbour, this is why fasting and almsgiving are bound together.

Fasting is a time to rethink one's life in prayer and repentance.

Almsgiving is an expression of love for our neighbour; it can be both material and spiritual.

Fasts and Fast-Free Weeks

Fasts Lasting Many Days

- **The Great Fast (The Forty-Day Fast, *Tessarakosti*):** starting on the Monday after Cheesefare Sunday until the feast of Christ's Resurrection
- **Peter's Fast (*Petrivka*):** starting on the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints until the feast of Saints Peter and Paul
- **The Dormition Fast (*Spasivka*):** starting on August 1/14 until the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God
- **The Nativity Fast (*Pylypivka*):** starting on November 15/28 until Christ's Nativity

Fasts Lasting One Day

- every Friday, except for fast-free weeks and feasts of the Lord and of the Mother of God
- on the Eves of the Nativity and of the Theophany • on the feasts of the Beheading of John the Forerunner and the Exaltation of the Precious Cross

Fast-Free Weeks

- from the Nativity of Christ until Theophany
- from the Sunday of the Tax-Collector and the Pharisee until the Sunday of the Prodigal Son
- Bright Week of Pascha (Easter)
- from the Descent of the Holy Spirit until the Sunday of All Saints





Friendship



Those who truly love their neighbours, out of necessity they will give alms to the poor, to whatever degree they are able, so that one can confidently say that love without almsgiving is not love, it is not a love that is sincere and true.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, *Pastoral Letter to the Clergy and the Faithful for Great Lent*

Theme 15

Etiquette Inside and Outside of Church



A pilgrimage at the monastery in Krekhiv



I will come into your house, I will bow in worship towards your holy temple in fear of you.

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, Introductory Prayers

Daryna: Father Andrii, are there any guidelines with respect to church etiquette? How does one behave there?

Father Andrii: I want to say right away that there are separate and very detailed instructions on this topic. Here, I will briefly explain to you what is most important. Before anything else, when entering a church, you should

make the sign of the holy Cross. It is essential to continue being in church with reverence.



And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them.

Ex 25:8

Martyn: I wonder, what does this reverence mean?

Father Andrii: Reverence is not only polite behaviour, but also our good, dignified standing before God in response to his looking at us with love. It is awe, humility, an inexpressible respect before God so present and near. It is also an interior modesty, spiritual sensitivity, attention, and concentration. The behaviour of a person should be reverent both inside and outside of God's church.

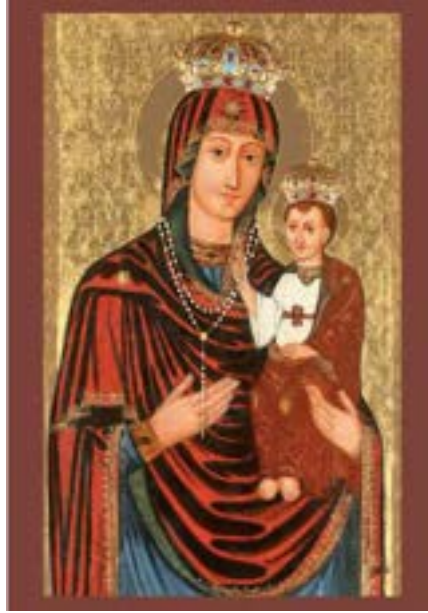
Serhii: When we behave reverently in God's church, I understand that. But outside of church — I cannot understand this. Why should I behave in a reverent manner outside church?

Father Andrii: For the reason that the Lord is present not only in churches. Reverent behaviour outside of church includes greeting another person in all sincerity using the language of God, making the sign of Cross in front of a holy place. After all, this also prepares one for coming to God's church.



The physical bearing and gestures of a Christian during prayer are elements of the Church's prayer and visible signs of personal faith and piety. These include: the sign of the Cross, standing, the raising of hands, kneeling, bows and prostrations, and the kissing of holy objects.

Christ — Our Pascha, 625



The Terebovlia Wonderworking Icon of the Mother of God in Saint George's Cathedral, Lviv



It is not permitted to look around the church out of boredom or foolish curiosity. But to look around in order to understand the divine meaning of the church, then this is a good thing.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, *Pastoral Letter to the Faithful of the Lviv and Kamianets Eparchies* — “About the Church”

Chrystyna: How does one prepare to come to God's church?

Father Andrii: In preparing oneself for participation in the divine services, it is important to reconcile ourselves to all who may have something against us (compare Mt 5:23-24). When going to church, it is important to open ourselves to prayer. The best preparation in anticipation of the Divine Liturgy is prayerful participation in the divine services of Vespers, Matins, and the Hours. It is expected that proper clothing and outward appearance are maintained, so as not to provoke our fellow human beings to judge and not to be a temptation for them.

Marichka: I understand that it is worth coming early and praying in church. Is it possible to say your own prayers during the divine services?

Father Andrii: It would not be appropriate to say a personal prayer during a communal service in church. The best time for personal prayer is before and after a communal divine service.

Serhii: And why do people stand or sit or kneel or walk during the divine services? And what is the meaning of all these ways of conducting oneself and gestures?

Father Andrii: During any divine service in God's church we usually stand as a sign of the Resurrection of Christ and our future resurrection from the dead. Sometimes we also sit down to listen carefully to the reading of the Psalms or the priest's homily. Prayer while kneeling is an outward expression of repentance, sorrow, and regret. At some divine services we do kneel and bow to the ground. To partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord, we approach the priest.

Daryna: How does one approach Holy Communion?

Father Andrii: To do this we fold our arms in the form of a cross across our chests.



He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

Mk 11:17

Marichka: How does one walk out of church? Should I make any special gestures?

Father Andrii: We must remain in church until the end of any divine service — until the priest's blessing (the Dismissal). Before leaving church, we kiss the Cross and the icons on the tetrapod. And after we exit the church, we face the entrance and make the sign of the holy Cross with a bow. Remember that God is present everywhere, so our behaviour in church and outside of it should be appropriate. But we will talk about the life of a Christian in the world in the eternal City of Rome.

In God's church, people should behave reverently.

Reverence is a person's humble, being in awe of God, penitential, God-loving way of conducting himself or herself before God and holy objects.

Upon entry to and exit from church we make the sign of the holy Cross, and during our stay in church we observe a prayerful silence.



Chapter Three

We Love



That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Lk 24:33-35

How important it is to find a good person to have a conversation with, someone who will listen, hear you, and give good advice. It is equally important to put good advice into practice. The disciples, recognizing their risen Teacher, immediately returned to Jerusalem to proclaim his Resurrection to the apostles. Are we, the young people of the twentyfirst century, ready to proclaim the risen Christ to our peers? Are we joyful Christians?





The Cathedral of Saint Sophia — The Wisdom of God Rome, 1969

The visible Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Rome is a sign of an invisible “Cathedral of living Ukrainians, a holy place of prayer and liturgical sacrifice for the dead, the living and the yet unborn” (Patriarch Josyf Slipyi). As he was building this church, Patriarch Josyf Slipyi had in mind the Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Kyiv as the mother church of our Church. The Patriarchal Cathedral in Rome is a symbol of the universality of Kyiv’s spiritual heritage and the embodiment of the Ukrainian heart’s thirst for the fullness of unity in Christ.

And for a moment the group of our pilgrims stopped at the entrance to this sacred cathedral.

Theme 1

The Commandments of Love



Sophia — the Wisdom of God



“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

Mt22, 36-39

Father Andrii: Earlier we visited the Ukrainian holy places in Kyiv and Lviv. Now, being in Rome, we are standing before the majestic Cathedral of Saint Sophia — the Wisdom of God.

In the Old Testament, people came to know the Wisdom of God through Divine Revelation and creation. The Psalms convey the beauty of God's creation perfectly, through the knowledge of which one can come to an understanding of the Wisdom of God.

In the New Testament, Wisdom is the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, through whom and by whom everything is created in wisdom (compare Col 1:16).

Sometimes young people perceive Christianity as something very complicated and confusing. In fact, it is based on the two Commandments of love. And everything else amounts to explanations, specific examples, instructions, and advice on how to put them into action.

Do any of you know these Commandments of love?



O Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of love, Giver of good things, grant your servants to love one another as you have loved us, so that, with faith and love, with one mind, with one being and one soul, we may draw closer to you, O God, and give praise to you, and become partakers of your Holy Mysteries, and become worthy of your kingdom, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, Prayer before the Symbol of Faith during a Hierarchical Liturgy

Daryna: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.” And “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

Father Andrii: Yes. We are called to love God above all things, because he is our Creator and Saviour. He was the first who loved us, and “in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8), which does not close in on itself. The Lord pours out his love on all creation. For this reason, our love for God is a response to God's love for us.

Serhii: And how is one to understand correctly the Commandment “to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength...”?

Father Andrii: To love with all your heart means to put God first in all your decisions, plans, actions, and relations. Then everything else, as Saint Augustine teaches, will fall into place.

To love God with all one’s soul is to live according to God’s will, listening to his words and keeping his Commandments. Our whole life must be a response to God’s love.

And to love God with all one’s thoughts and strength means nothing more than to direct one’s spiritual and physical capabilities to discover God and fulfil his Commandments.



Christ and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:5-42)

Chrystyna: I want to ask about the second Commandment. I am not used to the biblical word “neighbour.” People do not use it in everyday language. They simply say: “friends,” “the people next door,” “acquaintances”... Do I have a proper understanding that my neighbour is everyone I meet in my life?

Father Andrii: Yes, that is right. A neighbour is everyone, regardless of appearance, social status, worldview, and so on. Human beings are neighbours to one another because they are created in God's image and likeness. And so, love for our neighbour is love for God, who is present in every person to lead him or her to happiness in gradually becoming like God.

Martyn: What does it mean to “love your neighbour”? Is this supposed to be feelings or works?

Father Andrii: Both. We must learn to look at every person with the merciful eyes of Christ. Christ forgave and taught us to forgive. He loved and taught us to love. He sacrificed himself out of love for us and taught us to love in the spirit of sacrifice.

Let us remember that love for one's neighbour is a concrete expression of our love for God. To love is to do good works without expecting any gratitude or reward.



Without love everything in the soul is dead, [for in such a soul] the will is not primarily directed towards true goodness, which is the highest good and simultaneously the ultimate truth, that is, the Almighty God.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, *The Wisdom of God*



Love has as its source God: it is the Love of the Father revealed in the Son and granted to us in the Holy Spirit (compare Rom 8). Anyone who participates in this kind of Love becomes capable, in the Holy Spirit, of loving the Father as the Son loves him. They can also love their neighbour to the very end, for “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends” (Jn 15:13).

Christ — Our Pascha, 845

Dmytro: Daryna began to mention the love of neighbour as the love of oneself. I always thought that love directed toward oneself was selfishness, pride, and therefore, a sin. And from this Commandment you can understand that you need to love yourself as well.

Father Andrii: Love for oneself is respect for the life that God has given us. Having created us in his own image and likeness, God lives in us.

We often mistakenly equate love of self with egotism and selfishness. In fact, to love ourselves is to look at ourselves through the eyes of our Father in heaven, to see ourselves as a beloved child of God.

To love oneself is to value oneself as a unique person, to wish oneself well and not to harm oneself. Such love can be called true compared to selfish love, which is manifested in pride, arrogance, debauchery, obscenity. True love is manifested in the care of one's interior world, in cleansing oneself from sins, in humbling the body before the spirit. We should take care of our own health and be concerned about expanding our spiritual capabilities and gifts in order to show our love for God and our neighbour more effectively.

Christianity is based on the two Commandments of love. Everything else is their detailed explanation.

God created human beings because he loves them. The meaning of life is in our affirmative response to God's love.

Love for God is expressed in love for neighbour.

Since each person is created in the image and likeness of God, we are called to love our neighbour as ourselves.



We love because he first loved us.

1 Jn 4:19

Theme 2

I Am the Lord Your God. One God



Moses entrusts the tablets of the covenant to the Jewish People



For you, Lord, are the help of the helpless, the hope of those without hope, the Saviour of the storm-tossed, the haven of those at sea, the physician of

the sick. Be all things to all people, O you who know each one and their request, each household and its needs.

Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, Anaphora

Martyn: Father, in addition to the two Commandments of love, as far as I know, the Lord also gave humankind the Ten Commandments. Why did he give us these Commandments?

Father Andrii: At the time of the exodus of the people of Israel from Egyptian slavery, Moses received the tablets of the covenant on which God's Commandments were written. This happened on Mount Sinai, where the Lord made a covenant with his people. This union was to strengthen the people in true freedom. In giving the Commandments, the Lord reminds us that it was he who brought Israel out of Egypt, a place of slavery and bondage. Keeping God's Commandments helps us to remain free from being enslaved to sin.

God's Commandments are very clear. First and foremost, the Lord calls us to faithfulness. Faithfulness is not to look for a replacement for God in our lives. Throughout history, the people themselves have made their own idols: they worshipped the forces of nature, animals or objects made with their own hands. Sometimes people proclaimed themselves gods. But do not think that worshipping idols is a thing of the past! Not far away are many people who bestow upon objects and upon the rest of the population a meaning which is uncharacteristic of them, making for themselves idols out of them. Such people spend all their efforts directed toward acquiring material goods. Quite often, wealth, career, and power become the only goal of human life. Even so, nothing can replace God and make us happier.



The rescue of the three youths in the fiery furnace (Dan 3)

Dmytro: Father Andrii, why do we call God Lord?

Father Andrii: The word “Lord” means “master, sovereign, overseer.” By acknowledging God as Lord, we acknowledge him as Lord of our entire life. Realizing the connection between us and the Lord God, we become closer to him and add meaning to our lives.

Serhii: Idolatry was once considered a direct violation of the First Commandment of God. And what can be a violation of this Commandment today?

Father Andrii: Such widespread phenomena such as believing in horoscopes, fortune-telling and other magical acts are also idolatry. By resorting to these practices, we stop trusting God and believing in his presence and almighty power. Do you think that cards or stars know more than the One who created the universe?

When we indulge in occult practices, esotericism, we consult magicians, clairvoyants, spirit mediums, and fortune-tellers. We believe in destiny as something inevitable, we violate the “You shall have no other gods besides me” Commandment. Those who are devoted to various neopagan teachings and cults violate this Commandment as well. They claim the existence of many idols, which manifest themselves through the forces of nature and demand to be worshipped. Speculating on pre-Christian history, ancient Ukrainian customs and traditions, interpreting them onesidedly, the

preachers of such cults gain supporters among people who lack strength in their faith.



God is perfect and without deficiency in goodness or wisdom or power. He is without beginning, without end, eternal, uncircumscribed and ... He is perfect in all things. Now, if we say that there are several gods, there must be some difference to be found among them. For if there is no difference at all among them, then there is one God rather than several. But, if there is some difference, then where is the perfection? For, if one should come short of perfection in goodness, or power, or wisdom, or time, or place, then he should not be God. The identity of God in all things shows him to be one and not several.

John of Damascus, *The Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*

Martyn: But what about the signs and beliefs of the people that are very popular?

Father Andrii: You need to be very careful with all these because often these are very common superstitions. Not greeting someone across a doorstep, being afraid of a black cat, worrying when we cross the road with empty buckets, believing in witchcraft, witches, wearing a red thread — these are just a few examples of very common superstitions. If one believes in superstitions, then he or she emphasizes that some object or some action can have a profound effect on our future, even though such power is only in God's hands. One cannot infuse a supernatural meaning into ordinary things — as if something in our lives is dependent on them. The same applies to blind belief in dreams, which can generate unreasonable fear or lead to reckless actions.

Nevertheless, superstitions should not be confused with the usual signs of natural phenomena, which have a logical explanation or basis.



So now, O Lord our God, save us, I pray you, from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone.

2 Kings 19:19



God reveals himself as Person: “I AM WHO I AM,” or the “ONE WHO IS” (Ex 3:14). This God-who-is-Person is the only one who really is. Everything else exists only inasmuch as God wills it to exist. God is holy, that is, totally different from all creation. There is no other like God. He is unique. Thus, it is not possible to imagine him with our thoughts, or to portray him in any material way: “You shall not make for yourself an idol” (Ex 20:4). In contrast to lifeless idols, the true God lives.

Christ — Our Pascha, 75

Chrystyna: Honestly, at times certain people become idols for me, and I forget that God exclusively is the only source of human happiness.

Father Andrii: Chrystyna, you are right. In the search for happiness, a person can make mistakes. What you are talking about, and much more, is happening out of pride when some put themselves in God’s place, forgetting that God exclusively is the sole Lord of our life and happiness.

The First Commandment of God is God revealing himself to humankind, that he is the one and only and that there are no gods other than him.

God is our Lord. He is the One who gives life and sustains everything in its existence.

Nothing and no one can replace God for us. He must come first in the life of each one of us.

Modern neo-pagan cults and practices are a direct violation of this Commandment, because they blur our vision of God as the One who oversees the universe. Belief in superstition destroys our

relationship with God and shapes a worldview of fear, uncertainty, and lack of trust in the Creator.

Theme 3

You Shall Not Make Wrongful Use of the Name of the Lord Your God



The Saviour Not Made With Hands According to tradition, King Abgar of Edessa asked Christ so that he could be healed. Jesus, having heard about this, took a linen cloth, wiped his face with it and passed it on to the king's messengers. By touching the linen cloth, the king was healed. The outline of the Jesus' face remained on the linen cloth. For this reason, the icon is named "The Saviour Not Made With Hands," to put it differently, it was not painted by any human hand. This story is presented in the scenes on the sides. The face of the icon coincides with the copy of Jesus's face imprinted on his burial shroud ("The Shroud of Turin"), that is why we witness the portrait resemblance of Christ on various icons.

Serhii: I was really looking forward to have an opportunity to ask about the meaning of the Second Commandment of God. Walking through the streets, you can often hear people abusing God's name. Why is the "name of God" so important? Why can it not be used in the same way as other incidental words?

Father Andrii: In Holy Scripture, a name refers to an actual person. The Lord reveals to Moses his name Yahweh, which means “I AM WHO I AM.” Other names of God in Holy Scripture are the Lord of hosts (the Lord of powers), Adonai (the Lord).

To know a name means to know a person. To call on the name of God is to call on God himself. For this reason, God’s name should be spoken with due respect — it is holy. And that is why we cannot use it in jokes, in our everyday conversations, and to express our emotions.

Dmytro: Or perhaps it is better not to use God’s name at all, so as not to disrespect him?

Father Andrii: One needs to talk to God as often as possible. The Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us to refer to God as “Father” and to implore, “hallowed be thy name.” We pray for God’s presence in the world and for his name to be revered. We glorify God’s name through our Christian living. When we greet each other, for example, using the words: “Glory to Jesus Christ!” — at that point we respond: “Glory forever!” How wonderful it is, when we greet each other, to glorify the name of the Lord God at the same time! It happens vice versa as well. For example, people often shout out, “Oh God!”, when they are shocked, surprised, satisfied. Does this happen to you?



Do not accustom your mouth to oaths, nor habitually utter the name of the Holy One; for as a servant who is constantly under scrutiny will not lack bruises, so also the person who always swears and utters the Name will never be cleansed from sin.

Sir 23:9-10



Pronouncing in such short prayers the names of the Divine Persons, we express our joy or our anxiety, and we commend ourselves to God’s

protection. The invocation of God's name is never futile. However, we must beware never to "take the name of the Lord our God in vain," that is, irreverently, or in jest, or worse, in order to blaspheme.

Christ — Our Pascha, 685

Marichka: It does happen to me. And what about it, is this wrong?

Father Andrii: Think about whether it is appropriate to use God's name to express your feelings. Would we be pleased if our name was mentioned simply as an interjection that reveals our emotions?

By the way, my friends, even as we pray and invoke God's name, we must understand that we are standing before the Lord. We begin our prayer referring to him as "Father," "God," "Jesus," "Lord", and so forth. If we are inattentive in prayer or pray hastily, we also call on the name of God in vain. In other words, we called on God, but we did not properly realize before whom we stood or found ourselves on our knees. I think that we all have experienced something similar.



The Revelation of God's Name to Moses on Mount Sinai

Marichka: Of course, it is. This is a very common phenomenon as is the fact that many people mock or complain about God.

Father Andrii: This also happens. Insulting God's name indicates that a person has an inferiority complex: he or she boosts his or her own self-esteem by humiliating another person. This cynical ridiculing of God is an

expression of unbelief and pride, the “father” of which is the devil. Many do this consciously, wanting to disrespect God.

Human beings are created in the image of God, and as a result the ones who sin against the holiness of God’s name are those who desire to harm their neighbours by cursing them. It is also a sin to complain — to blame God for one’s own problems and misfortunes.

One cannot pray to God for help in sinning. One prays to successfully cheat on a test, but another — for harm to be done to some person. Besides, this is not prayer but a direct offence against the Lord God, in other words, sacrilege.

Martyn: Is swearing in God’s name a violation of this Commandment?

Father Andrii: Yes, this is a violation. However, in very important cases, an oath is allowed. This is the oath of a priest made during his ordination, the oath of a couple made during their Crowning, the oath of monks made during their vows. Morally binding is the oath taken by a president, a soldier, a judge, and a witness during court proceedings. Failure to observe an oath is a violation of that oath.



Blessed Priest-Martyr Mykolai Charnetskyi

When the blessed priest-martyr Mykolai Charnetskyi was working really hard in the blacksmith shop while in exile, one of his overseers pushed the hunched over bishop, and from this collision the bishop fell down. The elderly man's facial expression, with which the bishop embraced his offender did not give any peace of mind to his overseer. Afterwards, the overseer returned with genuine repentance. And the bishop hugged him.

God's name is holy because it expresses the very Person of God.

Respect for God's name must be shown in daily life and in personal prayer.

A solemn oath and calling God to help is an ancient and good Christian tradition. Mocking God, cursing, and violating an oath are sins.



That we may truly celebrate its beyond unity and god-genesis, we name that beyond names by 'Trinity' and a 'Unitary' divine name.

Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*



Above all, my beloved, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No' be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

Jas 5:12



The profession of perpetual vows

Theme 4

Remember to Keep the Lord's Day Holy



The Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem (Jn 12:12-19)



We thank you, Lord our God, who have raised us from our beds and placed into our mouths a word of praise to worship and call on your holy name. We entreat your mercy which you have always used in our life.

Matins, First Prayer of Light



But we all hold this common gathering on Sunday, since it is the first day, on which God transforming the darkness and matter made the universe, and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead.

Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*

Father Andrii: Today is Sunday, a special day for every Christian. One specific day of each week that belongs to the Lord is called holy or the Lord's day. Communal prayer on this day is the fulfillment of the Third Commandment of God, "Remember to keep the Lord's day holy."

Serhii: Why is this day holy?

Father Andrii: For on this day Jesus Christ is risen. In remembrance of Christ's Resurrection, Christians gather for divine services every Sunday. Christian feasts that give praise to Christ, to the Mother of God and to specifically venerated saints should not be overlooked. These feasts have also become "holy days" when Christians gather for prayer.

Daryna: Father Andrii, is it enough to just take part in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feasts to say that I am observing the Third Commandment?

Father Andrii: The main and best way to fulfill this Commandment is to participate in Sunday and festal divine services. Among them, the Divine Liturgy is the one that most fully conveys the joy of meeting the risen Christ. In addition, Vespers and Matins for Sundays are also part of the celebration of the Lord's day. The texts and chants of these divine services fill us with spiritual joy. Without participating in these divine services, in the Sunday Liturgy for the most part, the life of a Christian becomes mundane, the connection with the community and the Lord, whose Body and Blood we receive in the Most Holy Eucharist, is lost.



The women-myrrhbearers (Mt 28:10)

Serhii: I have one question concerning this Commandment. What can people do who must perform certain duties and cannot be present for the divine services?

Father Andrii: We should look for opportunities for communal prayer, not for any opportunity to avoid it. Although it does happen where there is no possibility of participating in communal prayer, for example, through caring for an infant or for someone who is in poor health, through performing some socially important work (doctor, police officer, firefighter, border guard, military personnel, etc.). In this case, a Sunday or feast without participating in the Liturgy is not a violation of this Commandment.

Martyn: We have now come home from church. But how does one continue the celebration of Sunday or a feast?

Father Andrii: The celebration of the Lord's Day in church continues at the family meal, visiting parents, relatives, the sick or members of the church community who are frail, those in prison, and doing works of mercy. These and other things will be an opportunity to share the joy of celebration with those who are deprived of this joy.



Moses said, 'Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. For six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh

day, which is a sabbath, there will be none.’ On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none. The Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions? See! The Lord has given you the sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day.’ So the people rested on the seventh day.

Ex 16:25-30

Chrystyna: You should not work or be busy caring for your house on Sundays and major Christian feasts. My mother taught me this from an early age. Is this also probably the fulfillment of God’s Commandment and the celebration of the Lord’s day?

Father Andrii: You are right, Chrystyna. A holy day is called holy that belongs not to us but to God. On this day, you need to postpone all daily activities, avoid hard work, and everyday activities.

Rest makes a person free in reality, it gives strength and inspiration to work during the rest of the week. In the Old Testament, this Commandment even required that domestic animals have a chance to rest.

However, it is important not to turn rest into an end itself. It is important to distinguish rest from idleness. Rest on Sundays helps to restore a person’s mental and physical strength. It is useful to devote more time on this day to prayer, reading, active recreation, and so on.

The sins whereby we most often violate the Third Commandment of God, are, first of all, ignoring Sunday and festal divine services, hard work or forcing someone to work.

A person sins when the Lord’s day is lived only inwardly, neglecting to serve God and his or her neighbour.



Just as Christian tradition views the daily cycle as an icon of the history of salvation, so also the week is viewed as such an icon. The week has its beginning in the creation of the world and its culmination in the glorious second coming of Christ. Sunday, which is the Eighth Day, the first and

unique day of the New Creation, becomes the first day of the week. Sunday as the Eighth Day is a prophetic sign and beginning of the coming “resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come” (Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed). In the remaining six days of the week, from Monday to Saturday, the Church celebrates the fulfilment of God’s plan of salvation — from the creation of the world to the achievement of its fullness and completion.

Christ — Our Pascha, 560

Participation in the divine services on Sundays and on Christian feasts is the fulfillment of the Third Commandment of God.

Service to one’s neighbour is a continuation of the celebration of the Lord’s day.

The celebration of Sundays and feasts includes Christian rest.

The violation of the Third Commandment is the neglect of service to God and people.



Hierarchical Divine Liturgy in the Church of Saints Volodymyr and Olha, Chicago

Theme 5

Father and Mother, Family, Homeland



The parable of the merciful father (Lk 15:11-32)



With all your heart honour your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that it was of your parents you were born; how can you repay what they have given to you?

Sir 7:27-28



Good Christians are in life able to keep God's Fourth Commandment to "honour your father and your mother" even when parents are not good and, God forbid, are not deserving of respect; children are to respect them all the same, for such is God's law.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, *Pastoral Letter* — "On Marriage and Family"

Father Andrii: My friends, know that through his Commandments the Lord says to a person, "Become like me." Each Commandment shows in what way and how a person can be like God. The Fourth Commandment about honouring parents originates from our love for God.

And who among you knows how to give the exact wording of the Fourth Commandment of God?

Chrystyna: "Honour your father and your mother."

Father Andrii: Parents are the basis of a community called a family. The relationship between parents and children and between members of a family is an earthly reflection of the communication of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The relationship between parents in their love reveals to children the love of God. And children also learn to love.



The Most Holy Family

Martyn: Is that the only reason we should respect our parents?

Father Andrii: We are called to honour and respect our parents also because they brought us into the world and raised us. We also honour our parents because they were given to us by God. We do not choose them but receive them as a gift from God. After all, it is through parents that we come to know the love of God. By loving them, we will be able to love all other people with that same love with which God has loved us.



Every Christian, whose life consists of love for God and neighbour, is called to love his or her nation deeply, and to contribute to the preservation and development of its cultural and spiritual heritage. The task of every Christian is to build up and develop an authentic Christian culture, which forms the conscience and assures a person's spiritual growth and development.

Christ — Our Pascha, 974

Chrystyna: Father, I know that Jesus Christ kept observing this Commandment!

Father Andrii: Indeed, that is true, Christ honoured Joseph and Mary, he was obedient to them (compare Lk 2:51). Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for refusing to take care of their parents (compare Mk 7:11-13).

Marichka: Father, is there any Commandment of God or any of God's words that talks about a positive parent-child relationship?

Father Andrii: The Holy Scriptures often speak of parents' responsibility for their children. In particular, the apostle Paul teaches: "And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). For parents received children as a gift from God. Above all, each person is a son or daughter of God, and then a child of his or her parents. For this reason, children are not the property of parents but a gift from God. Parents are called to care for their children and

to raise them in a Christian spirit. That is why both parents and children are called to treat each other with love.



Whoever forsakes a father is like a blasphemer, and whoever angers a mother is cursed by the Lord.

Sir 3:16

Martyn: However, it seems to me that it is very difficult or even impossible for orphaned children who have been abandoned by their parents to honour parents ...

Father Andrii: To tell you truth, there are irresponsible parents as well. Sins for which no one has shown repentance and their consequences are the cause. However, such parents should be respected without a doubt — at least for the fact that they gave their children life. That is why children should pray for their parents. And for all of us, orphaned children and children abandoned by their parents are a call from the Lord to provide them with parental care.



Confrontations during the Maidan protests. Kyiv, 2014

Serhii: Sometimes it is difficult for me to communicate with my parents. Nevertheless, I will make every effort to rise above these difficulties.

Father Andrii: I am happy for you. But I would like to reveal to you the broader horizons of understanding this Commandment. Built into it are honour, respect, obedience, and love for all the authorities and elders in one's life: spiritual guides, teachers, lecturers, and government officials.

This Commandment also calls us to love our Church, homeland, people, language, culture that is related to family and ancestry, as well as our worthy social and national customs. Just as we do not choose our parents, so too, we do not choose the nation into which we are born. This is the choice of the Lord himself. One who does not love the nation into which he or she was born, one who does not express this love through his or her concrete actions, he or she disrespects the Creator. So, remember: to love your people, your homeland — this also is the Fourth Commandment of God.



Remember, Lord, our nation under God, our government and all the military, grant them deep and undisturbed peace. Speak good things to their heart for your Church and for all your people, so that by their tranquility we may pass our life in quiet and calm, in all piety and purity. Remember, O Lord, all officials and authorities, our brethren in the government and all the armed forces. Keep those who are good in goodness. In your kindness, make those who are wicked good. Remember, O Lord, the people here present and those who are absent for just causes, and have mercy on them and on us according to the multitude of your mercy. Fill their storehouses with every good thing, preserve their marriages in peace and concord. Nourish the infants, guide the young, strengthen the aged, comfort the fainthearted, gather the scattered, bring back the wayward, and join them to your holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, Anaphora

Serhii: Are there any examples in Holy Scripture of violating this Commandment?

Father Andrii: Yes. A blatant violation of this Commandment is rudeness. It is depicted in Holy Scripture in the account of Noah and his son Ham (compare Gen 9:18-29) who mocked his father's unbecomingness. Ham's account is a teachable moment which affirms that children are not the judges of their parents. God alone is the just Judge.

Martyn: Why are children often in conflict with their parents?

Father Andrii: Often the cause of conflict is pride, when a person puts himself or herself above God and despises his or her parents. Sometimes, both sides commit the sin of pride, and at other times — one side. And then the harmonious relationships are destroyed.

We do not suddenly understand our parents. When we become parents ourselves, we understand them better. And when the time comes, we can sympathize with their poor health in old age and, as it were, reverse roles with them.

Let us not forget to pray for our parents even after their death. Moreover, remember the obligation to take care of their graves. This is also the fulfillment of the Fourth Commandment of God.



A strong family

We love our parents out of love for God, no matter how they treat us.

Our father and mother are given to us by God. They have brought us to life and pass on the wisdom and experience of life.

By loving our parents, we learn to love other people also.

This Commandment also applies to:

- **the responsibility of parents before God for the birth of children, caring for their material, psychological and spiritual needs, and their Christian upbringing and education;**
- **respect for people in positions of authority and listening to their directives and advice that do not contradict God's Commandments, and;**
- **love for one's Church, homeland, and one's nation.**

Sins against the Fourth Commandment of God include contempt for parents and elders, children, the Church, and homeland.



The blessed priest-martyr Mykola Tsehelskyi, experiencing the absolute harshness of being punished for his beliefs in a maximum security camp, longed for his children: "With the kiss of a father I kiss their small foreheads and ask that they live in all honesty, that they maintain their innocence ... that they keep far away from any defilement. For this I pray especially."

Theme 6

You Shall Not Kill



Abel's sacrifice (Gen 4:1-16)



You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, “You shall not murder;” and “whoever murders shall be liable to judgement.” But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement.

Mt 5:21-22

Father Andrii: I want to draw your attention to the icons in the lowest row of the iconostasis. It depicts the events of the Old Testament that preceded the birth of Jesus Christ. One of the icons shows the biblical story of Cain and Abel. What commandment of God does it remind you of?

All: “You shall not kill.”

Father Andrii: The Lord is the living God, the source of life for all. Every person, whose parents gave birth to them, receives from God life as a gift of love.

No one can take someone’s life or interrupt it. That is why the Lord condemns Cain’s murder of his brother Abel (compare Gen 4:1-16); God calls it a sin and brings in the “You shall not kill” Commandment to protect human life. The task of every human being is to defend and preserve human life from conception to natural death. However, the preservation of life is a matter not only of an individual person, but also of human communities: the family, society, the nation, and the state.



Master Almighty, Holy King, who chastises yet does not put to death, who supports those who fall and raises those who are downtrodden, who heals the physical afflictions of people...

Order of the Small Sanctification of Oil, Prayer



A 2017 pro-life and pro-family march in Kyiv



The Church teaches: “Nothing and no one can in any way permit the killing of an innocent human being, whether a fetus or an embryo, an infant or an adult, an old person, or one suffering from an incurable disease, or a person who is dying. Furthermore, no one is permitted to ask for this act of killing, either for himself or herself or for another person entrusted to his or her care, nor can he or she consent to it, either explicitly or implicitly. Nor can any authority legitimately recommend or permit such an action. For it is a question of the violation of the divine law, an offense against the dignity of the human person, a crime against life, and an attack on humanity.”

Christ — Our Pascha, 909

Daryna: Can you explain this Commandment in more detail?

Father Andrii: Those who violate this Commandment are not only murderers (those who take lives of other people), but also those who commit suicide (those who cut short their own lives).

The sins against this Commandment also include suicide, euthanasia (shortening a person’s life to end his or her suffering), torture, abortion, the destruction of “surplus” human embryos in the process of artificial insemination, the use of abortive contraception, and so on.

“You shall not kill” also means you shall not deliberately harm your own health. You need to take care of your health and avoid bad habits (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, etc.).

Violations of this Commandment include hatred of one’s neighbour, providing a person with such information that can later destroy him or her. It is also the psychological pressure placed on a person, offending his or her human dignity, slandering and defaming his or her name, and so on.



Serhii: Are military personnel who kill other people in war violating the Fifth Commandment of God? And, in general, is military service not sinful?

Father Andrii: We talked about everyone's duty of protecting each other's lives and health. This means that soldiers protect their people and their state. John the Baptist teaches about the ministry of soldiers as follows: "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages" (Lk 3:14).

War, conflicts between people, murders, ethnocides and genocides themselves devalue human life. At the same time, when soldiers, defending their homeland from invaders, kill them, then they do not violate this Commandment. When soldiers themselves become the invaders and kill people, then they commit the sin of murder.



Protecting life



And how will you say to God, "have mercy upon me," and ask of him remission of sins, when you are insolent to one who has done no sin, and call him to account for this hunger and great necessity, and throw all the brute beasts into the shade by your cruelty?

John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*



Serhii: If I kill my attacker in self-defense, to protect my life and my health, am I in violation of this Commandment?

Father Andrii: No. Killing an intruder in self-defense or protecting the weak or the sick is not intentional homicide. At the same time, any protection must be proportionate to the danger posed by an assailant's aggression. Killing another person out of hatred just because he or she is the enemy is not excusable. We must renounce hatred, revenge, and selfjudgment "based on the rights of winners," keeping in mind that we are called to imitate the apostle Paul who teaches, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21).

Chrystyna: But are there cases when a sick person lives only through the devices that support his or her life. How long can this last?

Father Andrii: When the specialist physicians have certified that a person is brain dead, his or her family can make the decision to turn off the artificial life support system. Such actions are not considered murder. Until that point, doctors are obliged to take care of a patient's life.

Marichka: Father, does our view of nature have anything to do with this Commandment?

Father Andrii: Yes, another sin against the “You shall not kill” Commandment is “ecological sin” — the destruction of the environment, its depletion, and pollution, or being indifferent to it. God has called humankind to care for creation, and accordingly to treat it responsibly, to use God's gifts wisely and carefully.



The blessed priest-martyrs Yakym Sen'kivskyi, Severian Baranyk, and Vitaliy Bairak of the Order of Saint Basil the Great were arrested by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs [NKVD] for their active pastoral activity, and they were later horrifically murdered in a Drohobych prison.

Serhii: What about the animals we kill and eat?

Father Andrii: We eat animals in keeping with God's words: "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything" (Gen. 9:3). A person eats the meat of animals and uses their hides and fur to survive on earth. At the same time, cruelty to animals is a sin.

God is the creator and the source of life.

Life on earth is a gift from God.

Everyone's mission is to protect the lives and health of others.

No one can claim a human life, and no one can bring it to an end.

Sin against the Fifth Commandment of God is also ecological sin.

Theme 7

You Shall Not Commit Adultery



Joseph resists Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:7-23)



A human being achieves chastity in the sexual life through the virtue of wholeness of being. This virtue orders the sexual impulse through love of neighbour and self. Chastity allows a person to control one's sexual impulse and restores the harmony of body, soul, and spirit.

Christ — Our Pascha, 763

Father Andrii: My friends, what is the next Commandment?

Chrystyna: “You shall not permit a stranger to defile your marriage bed” (You shall not commit adultery). And what will you tell us about this Commandment?

Father Andrii: God created man and woman for love. In the relations between a man and a woman, people learn to love, caring first and foremost for the good of the other. God had blessed intimacy, classically expressed in the words of Holy Scripture: “... and they become one flesh ...” (Gen 2:24). The sexual relations between a man and a woman express the love between them.

Marichka: Is it possible to have sexual relations without love?

Father Andrii: No, it is a sin. And it is called adultery. This is what God himself calls it. This sin begins in a person’s heart: “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:28). Adultery is an imitation, a distortion of love. It is the passionate use of another person for one’s own pleasure. Unfortunately, many people think of sexual relations as a physiological need, as recreation, as psychological relief, as an interesting and enjoyable pastime, believing that they can use their bodies as they please.

Marichka: What is wrong with that? It is just sex!...

Father Andrii: Many people think that love is one thing, but sex and sexual relations are completely different. In fact, sexual relations are combined with love, and without love they become impersonal. Without love, they turn out to be lust and demean human dignity.



True love awaits

Martyn: How can one use the potential of one's body in a proper and worthy manner?

Father Andrii: We worthily use the potential of our bodies when we put the search for God's glory and the good of our neighbour above our own pleasure. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us for our sanctification and our becoming like God (compare 1 Cor 6:19). For this reason, we should not defile our bodies by unworthily using them for the purposes of fornication and lust. We can put a stop to them through the virtue of wholeness of being.



He who believes that the body is destined for resurrection is careful of his robe and does not defile it by fornication, but he who does not believe in the resurrection gives way to fornication, abusing his body as though it were not part of himself.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *The Catecheses*

Serhii: What is the virtue of wholeness of being?

Father Andrii: “Wholeness of being” [Ukr. *tsilomudriye*] consists of two root words: “wholeness” [Ukr. *tsilisnist*] and “wisdom” [Ukr. *mudrist*]. It means purity of body, mind and heart, that is, the relationship between action, word, and thought. It is not only maintaining self-control over one’s sexual desires regardless of sexual depravity and lust, but also a life of love for God and neighbour. To have wholeness of being means to be guided in all one’s actions and thoughts by the wisdom “coming down from the Father of lights” (Jas 1:17).



Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body!

1 Cor 6:19-20



Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself.

1 Cor 6:18

Serhii: And using which specific thoughts and actions can I violate the “You shall not commit adultery” Commandment?

Father Andrii: These sins include: same-sex relationships (homosexuality) and other perversions, gender reassignment, extramarital sexual relations, rape, prostitution, pornography, masturbation, seducing others with one’s explicit, outward appearance.

Relations between a man and a woman reflect God’s love for humankind.

Intimate relations between a man and a woman is an expression of love between them.

In overcoming the passion of fornication, we achieve the virtue of wholeness of being.

Sexual relations outside of marriage is adultery.

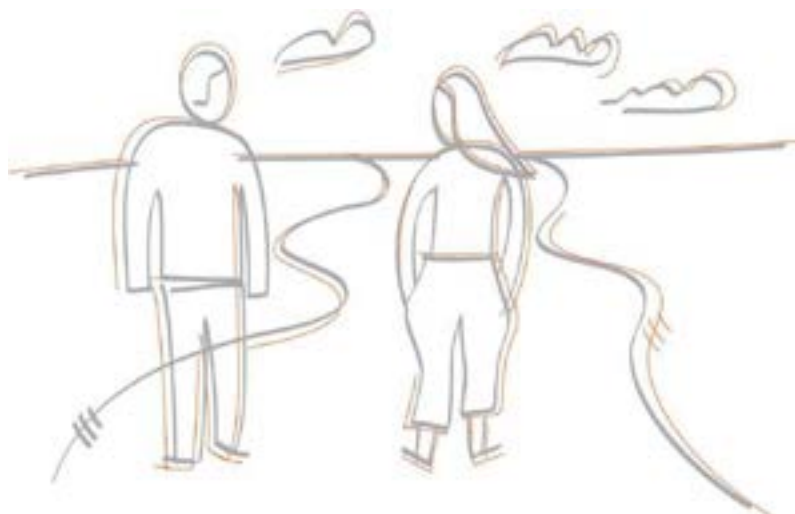


Plast scouts are aware that “the manifestation of love is an expression of deep attachment and commitment to the whole person, including his or her identity and spirituality.”



Instead, grant to me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love.

Prayer of Saint Ephrem the Syrian



Theme 8

You Shall Not Steal



The kiss of Judas (Mt 26:48-49)



The deceitful Judas, in his love for money, deceptively premeditated his betrayal of you, O Lord, the treasure of life. Therefore intoxicated, he ran to the Judeans and said to the transgressors, “What will you give me, and I will hand him over to you for you to crucify him?”

Matins of Great and Holy Wednesday. Sessional Hymn, Tone 4



Two things I ask of you; do not deny them to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.

Prov 30:7-9

Father Andrii: By the sin of adultery a person ruins his or her own dignity and the dignity of another person, he or she “hijacks” the possibility of a happy love. He or she loses his or her human dignity even when he or she is tempted to appropriate the possessions and fruits of another’s labour. Using the “You shall not steal” Commandment, the Lord warns us against this.

Daryna: Father Andrii, it seems to me that, although the “You shall not steal” Commandment is very succinct, it is quite meaningful...

Father Andrii: Of course, it is. We receive many blessings in our lives from God blessing us through our own labour. At the same time, each of us is tempted to take the easier path, having appropriated the fruits of other people’s labour. People do it out of laziness and out of a yearning to possess material goods.

Dmytro: Does this mean that a respect for labour is built into this Commandment of God?

Father Andrii: And not only respect, but also honestly fulfilling one’s labour. A person who labours conscientiously will never appropriate the fruits of another’s labour. If we value our labour, we will value the labour of another person.

Martyn: It just occurred to me that my family found themselves in Canada because they wanted to find work. Not even an ocean prevented them from doing so!

Father Andrii: In our families, honest work has always been considered one of the ways to achieve not only prosperity on earth, but also salvation in the kingdom of God. Parents are called to instill in their children hard work

and being frugal from an early age. A hard-working person will multiply life's blessings, but a lazy and avaricious person will always acknowledge the lack of blessings. This will push him or her to steal and to resort to other dishonest means of enrichment.



The parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30)



Private property is a form of personal control of the goods that are required for a person's full and comprehensive development. With the help of such property, each person obtains the "space" for individual and familial independence. Consequently, private property is an important element in the realization of personal freedom in social life. Respect for this form of ownership and the guaranteeing of one's right to it are important elements of a just and free society.

Christ — Our Pascha, 940

Serhii: Apart from respecting their labour, my parents have always valued the labour of other people. They did not even think of giving themselves what was not really theirs.

Father Andrii: Well said, because “what is not yours” is not only the theft of property, but also the theft of intellectual property, together with delaying and establishing the lowest possible wages. It is also ingratitude to God for the blessing of labour, having all its achievements credited to oneself.

Violating the Seventh Commandment also destroys public life. A special threat is posed by corruption in its many manifestations, notably bribery. Corrupt acts become the search for easy ways to enrich oneself and gain one-sided advantages over one’s neighbours. Those who take bribes and those who give them are responsible for these acts equally.

Too often the “You shall not steal” Commandment is violated in trade and services, unreasonably inflating prices (speculation) or providing loans at excessive interest rates (usury), resorting to miscalculation, selling low-quality products, and so on. The desire to profit also generates fraud, raiding, poor job performance, and hoarding borrowed and found objects for oneself.

Marichka: Father, now I understand why my mother encourages me to labour. But I am sometimes lazy, although I could help.

Father Andrii: Each of us struggles with laziness. It is sad to admit this, but often we are like the man in the parable who buried the talent given to him in the ground. In the parable of the talents, the master calls that slave wicked and lazy (compare Mt 25:14-30). We, too, often justify our unwillingness to labour in every way possible.



Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.

Eph 4:28



Being human, love people, not riches.

Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Those Who Practice Usury*

Greed is the reason to violate the “You shall not steal” Commandment.

It is important to nurture the virtue of generosity and diligence.

Neglecting one’s talents by being lazy is also a violation of the aforementioned “You shall not steal” Commandment.



Theme 9

You Shall Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbour



Susanna and the elders (Dan 13)



For the human individual, one's honour and good name are a treasure. Every person is entitled to honour, respect, and the social manifestation of such respect. In the Christian understanding, honour is also the social expression of the dignity of a person created in God's image. One of the tasks of a society is to care for the preservation of its citizens' honour and good name.

Christ — Our Pascha, 946



Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbour?

Jas 4:10-12

Father Andrii: My friends, know that the Commandments of God are given to people for their good, and that they defend their dignity. One of them is the “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour” Commandment.

Marichka: And how does this Commandment protect human dignity?

Father Andrii: The dignity of a human being is the dignity of the image of God according to which a human being was created. By offending any human being we disrespect the Lord Jesus Christ himself. For he said: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). That is why this Commandment warns against being untruthful and against condemnation in the relationships between persons.

Serhii: Father Andrii, what if I tell a lie for the good of another person?

Father Andrii: We will never achieve what is good through lies. By always adhering to the truth, we achieve the virtue of truthfulness. To speak the truth means to bear witness to Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life (compare Jn 14:6). Consequently, all lies, defamation, slander, and condemnation show infidelity to Christ and are harmful to one’s neighbour, to his or her honour and dignity. The honour of a human being – the image of God – requires an honest attitude towards it. Honesty is about telling your neighbour the truth, whatever it may be, even if you must suffer personally. However, for the good of our neighbour, we may not reveal the whole truth. For the truth must always go hand-in-hand with love.



You shall not be doubleminded or inconsistent in your speech. For double-talk is a deathtrap. Your work must be neither false nor empty but substantiated by action. You shall be neither greedy nor avaricious, neither a hypocrite nor malicious, nor arrogant. You shall not hatch an evil plot against your neighbour.

The Didache or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

Marichka: I really want to dedicate my life to practicing law or journalism to shed light on the truth!

Father Andrii: If you want to be useful to society, always remember that you are a Christian, and always be a Christian! This means that dishonest methods cannot be used to achieve the desired results or to achieve career growth. Being honest with yourself is perhaps the biggest challenge in these professions. It is very honourable to defend civil rights and freedoms. As Christians and active members of society, we are called to bring Christian morality and values into politics and the media. That is why people who want to connect their lives with these professions must have a clear conscience and the courage to bear witness to the truth.



The first martyr and archdeacon Stephen



Yes, O Lord and King! Let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian

Chrystyna: As I understood from your explanation, the sins against this Commandment apply to both the individual and the community.

Father Andrii: Exactly. When we are angry, when we tell a lie, when we expose eccentric faults in front of others, when we slander, when we misrepresent, we sin on a personal level. And in public life, such sins include the abuse of power, the manipulation of the media, perjury in court, justice that is unfair, and so on.



Sinners in hell

Protecting a human being's dignity as the image of God is the essence of God's Eighth Commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour."

The virtue of truthfulness is a sign of a true Christian.

Honesty is one of the foundations of society.

Sins against the Eighth Commandment of God include everything that has to do with being untruthful and everything that has no regard for a person's dignity.

Defamation is an unfriendly statement about someone in order to sow distrust and contempt.

Condemnation is contempt of one's neighbour for his or her immoral acts.

Gossiping happens when presuppositions are alleged to be real.

Defamation is the deliberate spreading of false information about another person.



Human society is impossible without interpersonal relations. The fundamental condition for human interaction, and by extension for social dialogue, is recognition of the dignity of others and respect for them. This respect, which begins with traditional gestures of politeness, includes truthfulness and trust between those communicating with each other. One form of social dialogue is the dissemination and exchange of information. The truthfulness of information is a foundation for the creation of association among people.

Christ — Our Pascha, 943



Theme 10

You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbour's Wife



The beheading of John the Baptist (Mt 14:3-12)



Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

Mk 10:11-12

Father Andrii: As you know, there is a feast of the Beheading of John the Baptist in the Church's calendar. It reminds us of the tragic death of the Forerunner of the Lord. The prophet died for blaming Herod for his illicit relationship with Herodias, his brother's wife. The power of Herod's lust blinded him so much that he did not stop even in spite of the killing of a prophet.

By the way, can any of you name the Commandment of God where such connections are condemned?

Marichka: “Do not covet your neighbour's wife.” This is the Ninth Commandment of God. Father, what does the Lord teach us in this Commandment?

Father Andrii: It concerns the sanctity of marriage and the dignity of a man and woman. The Church makes the union of a man and woman holy in the Mystery of Marriage. In marriage, God gives his very Self to a man and woman as love — the basis for communal Christian living, the procreation and raising of children. Do you understand that God himself is present in married life?

Martyn: Yes, I do understand. But you describe the marriage of a man and a woman as something sacred, although it is not always the case in reality.

Father Andrii: Without a doubt, the marriage of a man and woman is a sacred bond that a husband and wife make by way of faithfulness to God and to each other. No wonder the apostle Paul calls marriage a “domestic church” (compare Rom 16:5). As Christ loves his Church and the Church is faithful to Christ, so a husband and wife love one another and remain faithful to each another. The sanctity of marriage is realized in the daily

efforts to overcome personal selfishness, the inability to communicate, and lust. Otherwise, marital fidelity may not stand the test.



Expecting...

Serhii: Is one's sexual life also a gift from God?

Father Andrii: In the words of Scripture “and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24), this is about the sexual life between a man and a woman in marriage. This is surely a wonderful gift from God! What a great happiness it is to give life to each other and to give life to children. The true love of a man and a woman is manifested in sacrificial service.

Serhii: Is the kind of love you are talking about possible only in marriage?

Father Andrii: Yes. Marital love is an eternal gift from God, which the apostle Paul teaches: “Love never ends” (1 Cor 13:8). Growing in the gift

of marital love overcomes the temptation to divorce, providing the strength to overcome any crises and problems within married life.



Eternal God, you gathered the separate into one and made the bond of love unbreakable ... Grant that they may see their children's children, keep their marriage bed safe from all danger ... keep [them] in peace and oneness of mind, declare their marriage honourable, preserve their marriage bed undefiled, let their life together remain without blemish ... bless their comings-in and their goingsout, fill their life with good things ... keeping them spotless, blameless and without reproach for ever and ever.

Order of Crowning, Prayers

Dmytro: Does the Church not grant divorces?

Father Andrii: If “love never ends,” then marriage never ends, and there are no divorces. However, it sometimes happens that a marriage never took place as a Mystery — for example, due to forced marriage, personal infantilism, hidden illnesses, debts, in addition to harboring debilitating addictions.



The righteous Joachim and Anna

Daryna: And yet sin, perhaps, has affected even this sacred bond, being the marriage of a man and a woman. Are there any sinful dangers in marriage?

Father Andrii: Natural, divinely blessed sexual relations between spouses contain two integral components — intimate union and the possibility of conceiving a child. The selfish separation of these components is a sin against marital love.

Marriage is called to be open to childbearing. However, a new life is not always conceived during an intimate relationship. The formation of responsible parenthood in marriage is facilitated by natural methods of recognizing fertility, in other words, determining the fertile and infertile periods of a woman's menstrual cycle.

Marichka: Father, what specific sins are a violation of the Ninth Commandment of God?

Father Andrii: The sins against this Commandment are related to the abuse of God's gift of sexuality and fertility in marriage. Sinful is sexual intercourse between a man and a woman without full union when either an artificial barrier to conceiving a child (contraceptives) is used or unnatural sexual intercourse is practiced.

It is also a sin to demand or force sexual intercourse, which is a manifestation of selfishness, the satisfaction of one's own needs and neglect of the needs of another. Or, conversely, the avoidance of marital intimacy — except in cases when there are serious reasons for it or when it is a mutual decision.

It is a sin to waste time on vulgar and lewd thoughts, fantasies, flirtations, seductions, which inflame the passions and carnal desires.

Marital betrayals, often leading to the destruction of the family, and cohabitation itself with a partner outside the Mystery of Marriage (so-called “civil marriage, or common law living”) are also sinful.

Jealousy and resentment are also sins when, under the guise of love, one person takes advantages of the freedom of another person.



The marital love of a man and a woman is expressed in their sexual life together. In the sexual act, spouses are joined in love, expressing the indissoluble unity of marital life. True marital love is fruitful love, therefore the bodily union of spouses is open to procreation. The sexual act has a double aspect: unitive and procreative. Only such a conjugal act is virtuous and pure. The loss of one of these aspects of the sexual act distorts its substance, destroys the virtue and purity of marital life, and is therefore a sin.

Christ — Our Pascha, 871



What the soul is for a human being, love is for the family. Where the soul is no more, life also disappears; there will be a body, but it will be dead. A family without love is like a body without a soul.



Holy Crowning

God blessed man and woman for married life (compare Gen 1:27).

A man and woman are married in the Holy Mystery of Marriage.

The marriage of a man and a woman is a sacred bond entered into by the spouses in fidelity to God and to one another.

The sins against the Ninth Commandment of God include:

- **marital betrayal;**
- **sexual intercourse between a man and a woman using contraceptives;**
- **making demands on sexual relations, forcing them to do so, avoiding marital intimacy;**
- **“civil marriage”;**
- **consent of a man and a woman to divorce;**
- **admiring vulgar, lewd thoughts and fantasies, and;**
- **jealousy.**

Theme 11

You Shall Not Covet the Goods of Your Neighbour



The parable of the wicked tenants in the vineyard (Mt 21:33-34)



To take away a neighbour's living is to commit murder; to deprive an employee of wages is to shed blood.

Sir 34:22



Corruption is a dangerous phenomenon for society, and — from the Christian point of view — a sin. A government loses its purpose: it ceases to represent and defend its citizens, and instead becomes a menace to them. A Christian may not participate in corrupt acts, and should not remain silent when others commit them.

Christ — Our Pascha, 967

Father Andrii: My friends! We have already talked about God's Commandment "You shall not steal." I want to ask you: and what commandment of God also has to do with the taking of another's property?

Daryna: "You shall not covet anything that is your neighbour's." This is the Tenth and final Commandment of God about which we have not yet spoken.

Dmytro: We talked about the Ninth Commandment of God which began with the words "You shall not covet." But I still did not understand what this word means...

Father Andrii: It means "do not want to take uncontrollably," "do not seek to take possession of." Such a desire and yearning is the spiritual disease of lust that motivates us to take possession of our neighbour's property.

Serhii: If I understand it correctly, this Commandment, unlike the Seventh, warns not only against the taking of other people's things but also against the desire to want them.

Father Andrii: I agree. But it is a question not only about material things. Desire also applies to the immaterial goods of our neighbours.

Daryna: And what are these immaterial goods?

Father Andrii: For example, these can be the good name of one's neighbour, his or her dignity as a person, his or her social status, as well as

his or her intellectual property.

Martyn: What do you mean by the social status of our neighbours?

Father Andrii: Every person has a life experience, each person holds a certain position, each person is a specialist in a certain field. He or she, with God's blessing, has reached a certain social position through his or her own efforts and hard work. It is a sin to encroach on one's neighbour's social position for one's own benefit or out of envy.



The dekulakization of peasants. The village of Udachne, Donetsk Region, in the 1930s

Dmytro: Today, many people are suing for copyright infringement on ideas and other creative achievements. Is the longing to use such property without the consent of the author lust?

Father Andrii: Yes, and this lust leads to plagiarism. Imagine that you are writing a thesis. You find material on the internet and copy it into your work without any reference to the author, in other words, you submit everything as if you wrote the same excerpt. This is how you have violated the Tenth Commandment of God, having fulfilled your lust.



When the glorious disciples were being enlightened at the washing of the feet during the supper, then Judas the ungodly was stricken and darkened with the love of money. And to lawless judges he delivered you, the righteous Judge. O lover of money, look upon him who for money's sake hanged himself. Flee from the insatiable soul, which dared such a deed against the Teacher. O Lord benevolent to all, glory be to you.

Troparion of Great Thursday

Marichka: And why is this lust unworthy in God's eyes?

Father Andrii: Any property owned by a person is a gift from God. God wanted and allowed that a person would possess it and be happy by using it and make others happy.

As we lust after what is not our own we seem to say: "God, you were wrong to give this object not to me but to another person." To lust after is to "admonish" God for his gifts to other people and not really know how to appreciate those gifts from God that we ourselves have. Indeed, everyone is abundantly blessed by God.

Chrystyna: Father, is there a narrative in Holy Scripture that describes lust and its consequences?

Father Andrii: Christ's parable of the wicked tenants in the vineyard (compare Mt 21:33-42) comes to mind, the wicked tenants in the vineyard who killed the master's servants because they did not want to return the share due to him but sought to keep the whole amount for themselves. In their lust, they did not stop even in the face of the murder of the heir of the vineyard sent to them — the master's son! Eventually, justice in the parable was restored by punishing the guilty.

Serhii: What do you have in mind?

Father Andrii: The parable says that "he will put those wretches to a miserable death" (Mt 21:41), meaning that all longing for what is not ours

is doomed to be unsuccessful and inevitably fail. The guilty will not only lose the grace of God but will be punished according to the law. Christians recognize the justice of such punishment.

However, the state and its institutions cannot protect against uncontrollable lust for someone else's property. A person can overcome this passion by listening to the voice of his or her conscience.

Martyn: What does one have to do to listen to one's conscience?

Father Andrii: A person becomes responsive to his or her conscience through growth in the virtues, particularly in justice, selflessness, and mercy. Growth in the virtues should be combined with serious work in the hope that God will give us even more than we ask and need.

Marichka: What other sins result from lusting after our neighbours' goods?

Father Andrii: These include avarice, envy, careerism, wages being unpaid or withheld, unfair application of taxes, exploitation, etc.



Serhii: Can you give a specific example of one of these sins?

Father Andrii: Imagine that you are constantly thinking about your neighbour's beautiful car, believing that you should have a similar one. If you direct these thoughts in the right direction and start working harder to make more money and buy what you want, then your wishes can come true. If you focus on your neighbour and his or her car, you will start to envy him or her. This envy can lead to a sinful lust to steal this car or at least to damage it.

Unfortunately, people envy others and accuse their neighbour, their leader, their state and God of every sin. Believing that they deserve something more, they themselves do nothing to acquire something better or to become better. Indeed, will God give them something if they do not want to make any personal effort but only demand from God or others that their desires come true?



Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi provided us evidence and the example of how to use material goods: he started and provided financing for social, educational, and cultural projects. He was the most generous patron of Ukrainian art.

Dmytro: Father, how should the withholding of wages from employees be judged?

Father Andrii: If this is a deliberate withholding for one's personal gain, caused by avarice and greed, then it is a sin against the Tenth Commandment. Bribery, corruption, and careerism are also sins against this Commandment; these lead to poverty and economic crises and exacerbate social inequality.

With the Tenth Commandment, God warns us against lust.

Lust is a passionate desire for something that does not belong to us.

The sins against the Tenth Commandment, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s goods,” include avarice, envy, careerism, wages being withheld, the unfair application of taxes, corruption, bribery, and the like.



The avaricious person is a bad neighbour in the both the city and the country. The sea knows its boundaries, the night does not exceed the limits set from of old, but the avaricious person does not regard the passage of time, does not respect any limit, does not defer to the proper order of things, but rather imitates the violent nature of fire: spreading to all and devouring all.

Basil the Great, *To the Rich*

Theme 12

The Christian Understanding of Happiness — the Gospel Beatitudes



The commissioning of the apostles



There are three firm teachings of the Lord of life: hope, which is the beginning and end of our faith; righteousness, which is the beginning and end of judgment; and love, which is a testament to our joy and gladness in upright deeds.

The Epistle of Barnabus

Daryna: Father Andrii, thank you for explaining God's Commandments so beautifully. I have come to the conclusion that a person can achieve the kingdom of God by following them.

Father Andrii: In other words, Daryna, a person can achieve true happiness.

Dmytro: Can I learn a little more about it? I often ask myself what happiness is for human beings and how realistic is it to achieve happiness...

Father Andrii: It is not an easy question. People who lived hundreds and thousands of years ago tried to find the answer to this. Some believed that happiness is pleasure, others thought that it was knowledge and wisdom. Many people have identified happiness with wealth or with health and longevity. But none of these answers were found to be exhaustive. In seeking happiness, a person is, in fact, seeking God. This desire for happiness was instilled in each of us by the Lord himself. That happiness is only in God which Holy Scripture calls the “kingdom of heaven.”



Christ does not replace the Law with the Sermon on the Mount: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil them” (Mt 5:17). Christ rather discloses the full meaning of the Old Testament commandments: “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder;’ and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment ... You have heard that it was said ... But I say to you ... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:21-22; 27-28,48).

Christ — Our Pascha, 206

Chrystyna: Consequently, here, during one’s lifetime, is achieving happiness unrealistic? Is there a need to be in heaven?

Father Andrii: Not quite. Christ said that the kingdom of God is here among us, for “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). He represents the kingdom of

heaven. Everything that a person does together with God and for God can already make him or her happy on earth.

Marichka: Like everyone, I want to be happy. But I am not sure what I consider to be happiness is really happiness. Father, how can one not make a mistake and choose what one needs to really be happy?

Father Andrii: In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ points to those who are happy. To do this, he uses a very beautiful word — the “blessed” [Ukr. *blazhenni*] The list of Gospel Beatitudes is something like the Commandments of the New Testament which do not deny but improve on the Commandments of the Old Testament. Their importance for all of us is difficult to overestimate. This is why we pray and use them during the Liturgy:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and utter every kind of evil word against you falsely because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.



Daryna: Every time I hear or read these Beatitudes I become gripped with what is being proposed by the Lord, that is to say, a beatitude so different from our usual understanding of happiness. To call the hungry, the persecuted, and those who mourn, blessed, in other words happy, means to shatter all our notions about happiness and happy people.

Father Andrii: Absolutely right. Those who heard the Sermon on the Mount in those days were as amazed as you are now. And all because Christ brought the Good News of the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of the earth. The origin of our happiness is not in our achievements or the absence of failures but a gift from God — partaking in the kingdom of heaven. It is precisely in our belonging to the kingdom of heaven where the reward is, of which Christ speaks. And this fills our hearts with joy and gladness. All Christianity has been, is and will be, what is new for this world. To accept the what-is-new means to accept the One who proclaimed it to us — Christ the Saviour. He, and he alone, can make us happy.



May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the all-holy Trinity, One in Being, the source of life, one divine nature and one kingship, bless you and give you long life, fine children, success in life and faith, and fill you with every good thing on earth, and find you worthy of receiving as well the good things which have been promised, through the prayers of the Mother God and of all the saints.

Order of Crowning, Prayer



Happy are those who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his commandments. Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures for ever. They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.

Serhii: Father Andrii, it is difficult for me to agree with what you state about happiness. It seems to me that those whom Christ calls blessed are not happy.

Father Andrii: This is because we most often think of happiness as pleasure. The very word “blessedness” [Ukr. *blazhenstvo*] means more than pleasure. The blessed, of which Jesus Christ spoke in his Sermon on the Mount, are those who have embarked on the path of becoming like the heavenly Father himself, who is good. For this reason, the understanding of happiness is directly related to holiness for us Christians. Here, saints are for us an example of happiness achieved in their likeness to God.

Humankind’s search for happiness is a search for God and his kingdom.

In Christ, who is the personification of the kingdom of God, a person achieves happiness already here on earth.

The Gospel Beatitudes are a guide for every Christian.

The Beatitudes are the way of becoming like God.

Theme 13

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit



Blessed Klymentiy Sheptytskyi



The Holy Fathers taught that love of wealth is not part of man's innate nature, but appears as a distortion of man's desire for eternal life. The passion for acquiring wealth, which takes possession of a person, makes one a slave to money. The acquisition of wealth becomes an end in itself and leads to various sins. Such a passion gives rise to the illusion of one's self-sufficiency as we come to rely solely on material goods.

Christ — Our Pascha, 764

Daryna: I know that the first Beatitude sounds like this: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” I do know who the poor are. But why is Jesus being exact with reference to the poor in spirit?

Father Andrii: Actually, Daryna, this first Beatitude of the Sermon on the Mount is a kind of challenge for us. Most of us probably have a completely different idea of happiness, in no way related to poverty or wretchedness. Right?

Martyn: I will say this about myself. I do not think that one can be poor and happy. Ultimately, that is why I want to get a good education, I want to have a job that pays well and not to be dependent on anyone.

Father Andrii: To a certain degree you are right. This is a normal desire of every young person. But agree with me that this is not enough for happiness. Remember, being rich can enslave. Being concerned about riches can turn into a passion for accumulation and make one’s life consumeristic.

Happy is the one who is not attached to material goods. Then, in addition to having a huge fortune, one is poor in spirit. As you can see, the one who possesses a lot and the one who does not possess a single thing can be equally poor in spirit.



Blessed are the poor in spirit

Being poor in spirit is a constant human desire for the grace of God.

“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Jas 4:6).

An angel holding in his hands a red cape is a symbol of grace, the nakedness of the body is a symbol of human humility.

Serhii: Can an example be given to make it more understandable?

Father Andrii: You all know this example. I think back to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (compare Lk 16:19-31). Lazarus suffered from poverty, illness, and loneliness, but he faced his suffering without complaining. After his death, “[he was] carried away by the angels to be with Abraham” (Lk 16:22). Instead, the rich man who lived in luxury, who overindulged and pursued his own interests, while forgetting the needs of others, was condemned. If Lazarus were jealous of the rich, if he were to complain to God about his being poor, if he were to try to get rich regardless, he would end up after his death exactly where the rich man would be. In contrast, if the rich man were to see the needs of Lazarus, if he were not to live in luxury but were to do something for his neighbours, he would reach the kingdom of God.



Wealth is not a bad thing, but avarice and love of money are. A covetous person is one thing, and a rich person is another thing. The covetous person is not rich; he is in want of many things, and while he needs many things, he can never be rich. The covetous man is a keeper, not a master, of wealth; a slave, not a lord.

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues*

Chrystyna: So, does the Beatitude speak about not being attached to what is material?

Father Andrii: Yes, but it is not just this, Chrystyna. Jesus urges us never to rest in what has been achieved in our spiritual life but to constantly seek God who is to become all things to us. The one who is poor in spirit is one who lives in the grace of God with a humble heart. But the one who is selfsufficient is not poor in spirit.

Being poor in spirit is not cowardice. Only a strong person can acknowledge the authority of God in his or her life. These people were the poor shepherds and the three wise men who worshiped the newborn Christ. You can truly become rich only in God. His kingdom is the treasure we must seek.

Martyn: Then, will my desire to study at university and get a higher education contradict being poor in spirit?

Father Andrii: On the contrary, I support you in this endeavour in every possible way. It is exciting when a young person seeks to realize himself or herself through learning and apply themselves. Nonetheless, I think, and you will agree with me, that being poor in spirit also applies to intellectual development. One ceases to learn when one believes that one already knows all things. The Greek philosopher Socrates once said, “I know that I know nothing.” Therefore, the stimulus for intellectual growth is interior humility.

Dmytro: I have already graduated and work in a company. How can I acquire this blessedness of Christ in my situation?

Father Andrii: We earn our living by working. By working we benefit our neighbours and society as a whole. To be poor in spirit in one’s work is to perceive it not only as a means of self-sufficiency but also as an opportunity to serve others. Even in career growth, one needs to stay simple in everything: in our way of life, in how we communicate, in our recreation, etc. All of us lack this simplicity today.



Look upon me, your sinful and useless servant; cleanse my heart and soul of the evil that lies on my conscience. By the power of your Holy Spirit enable me, who am clothed with the grace of the priesthood, to stand before this your Holy Table and offer the sacrifice of your holy and most pure Body and precious Blood.

Bending my neck, I approach and I petition you: Turn not your face from me, nor reject me from among your children, but allow these gifts to be offered to you by me, your sinful and unworthy servant.

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, the Priest's Prayer during the Cherubic Hymn



If the Almighty is your gold and your precious silver, then you will delight in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God. You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows. You will decide on a matter, and it will be established for you, and light will shine on your ways. When others are humiliated, you say it is pride, for he saves the humble. He will deliver even those who are guilty; they will escape because of the cleanness of your hands.

Job 22:25-30

The poor in spirit are those who have no attachment to material goods and seek God with a humble heart.

Lazarus from Jesus' parable is the best illustration of a poor man who gains the kingdom of heaven.

A Christian must constantly strive for perfection without losing his or her being poor in spirit. Intellectual growth is always associated with humbly accepting the limitations of one's knowledge.

Being poor in spirit in terms of professional growth is motivation to serve others.

Simplicity in everything is a manifestation of being poor in spirit.

Theme 14

Blessed Are They Who Mourn



The Pietà



Tears are like the blood of the soul's wounds.

Gregory of Nyssa, *Funeral Sermon in Memory of the Empress Placilla*



He will swallow up death for ever. Then the Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God! We have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Isa 25:8-10

Dmytro: The next Beatitude is “Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Who is this about? Does it concern those are crying in pain?

Father Andrii: And more so, Dmytro. In addition to the tears of pain and sorrow, there are other causes of tears in life. Some cry in moments of joy, and other lament their sins. There are tears of emotion from the feeling of intimacy with God during prayer. It is these tears that bring joy, and people become happy and blessed.

Chrystyna: For me, the words “blessed are they who mourn” support me, a person with an illness. I see my suffering as participation in Christ’s suffering.

Father Andrii: Yes. Christ himself accepted suffering until death, so that in all things he could sympathize with our suffering. The sign of Christ’s compassion is the Cross. Christ transformed the Cross, a symbol of suffering and torment, into a sign of our salvation. In that case, every suffering can contribute to our salvation.

Martyn: I once saw an interesting painting. A person is shown walking on the sand. Except Christ’s invisible footsteps are seen alongside in addition to the person’s footsteps. This indicates that we are never alone in our lives. The Lord helps us to face our suffering and our Crosses.

Father Andrii: Yes, I saw this painting as well. Herein lies the Christian understanding of suffering: we share in the sufferings of Christ, and he

participates in our sufferings. He suffers with us, he mourns and worries with us in everything.



Blessed are they who mourn

Mourning is an expression of one's spiritual battle and Cross in life.

Consolation is an expression of God's support and of the joy of repentance.

The grieving woman personifies those who mourn, and the radiant angel personifies the consolation of God.

Serhii: There is much suffering around us. Wars, catastrophes, natural disasters, epidemics ... Millions of people in the world are suffering. It is hard for me to accept this as meaningful.

Daryna: I see the meaning of suffering in learning to serve and to empathize with those suffering.

Father Andrii: Moreover, we are called to pray for them. Through prayer, our hearts become sensitive to the pain of other people. Our compassion is a good spiritual remedy for others. Our material assistance is no less important. Compassion teaches us how to show love for our neighbour in action. This love not only helps those who suffer, but also it transforms our very selves.

As you can see, Christ's words "Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted" show that blessedness is not always a feeling of consolation. This is also God's blessing in times of suffering, affliction, and adversity.



The spiritual ascetics teach that the fear of God yields tears of repentance. Tears bring spiritual joy while joy gives strength. In virtue of this the soul bears fruit. Thus, pain, suffering, and tears culminate in blessedness. The gift of tears cleanses our spiritual eyes and enables us to see everything around us the way that God sees it. We then do not judge our neighbour but are filled with merciful love, having become capable of feeling the suffering and needs of others.

Christ — Our Pascha, 689



According to tradition, the Venerable Mary of Egypt was a prostitute. At one point, when she traveled to Jerusalem, she wanted to enter the church together with other pilgrims, but she could not — she kept being stopped by some unknown force. At the same time, she felt a sincere repentance and desire to change her life. The Venerable Mary spent forty-seven years in the wilderness, lamenting her sinful deeds and finding comfort in God's mercy.

Tears are a gift from the Holy Spirit in moments of communion with God in prayer and repentance.

Sufferings have a deep meaning because they reveal to us the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

Compassion for the suffering of others is a virtue.

Prayer, a conversation, our being present, material help are concrete signs of compassion for our neighbour.

Consolation lies in graciously accepting help from the Lord and from people.



By your passion we were set free from our passions, O Christ...

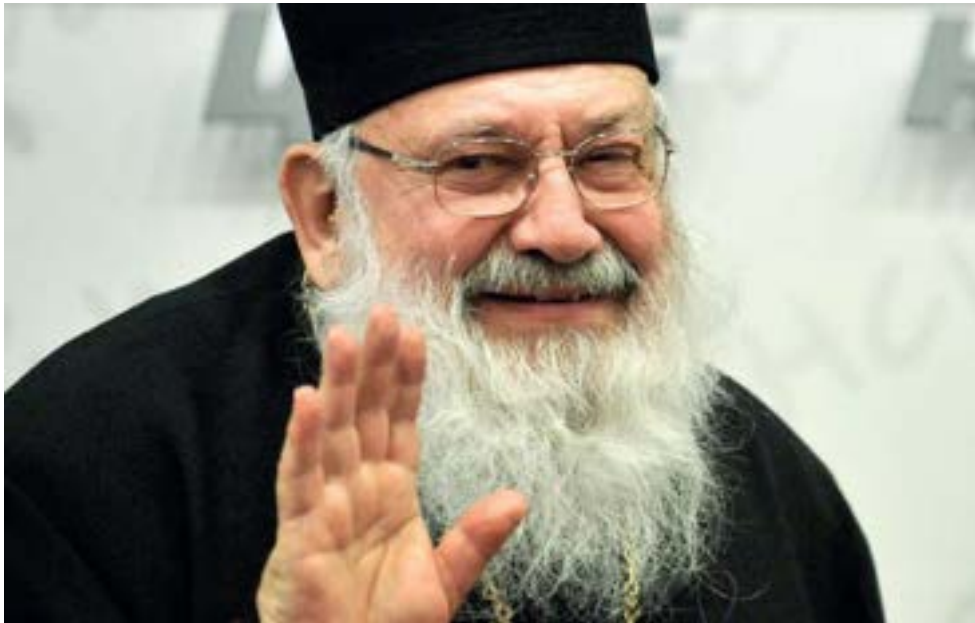
Saturday Vespers, Tone 1, Stichira at “O Lord, I have cried”



An underground-era Liturgy being celebrated in 1988 in the forest near the village of Nedilna, Starosambir District

Theme 15

Blessed Are the Meek



His Beatitude Lubomyr Husar used to maintain that though loving those who hate us is not easy, still hatred should be “substituted with love. This is a huge task, and it is possible to do so.”



Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

Phil 4:5

Father Andrii: In front of you is an icon of the holy passionbearers Borys and Hlib. Their ascetic struggle was that they refused to be at war with their brother for the princely throne, they did not resist his attack and deadly actions. This type of mindset demonstrated by these saints reminds me of Christ’s Beatitude: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

Martyn: Is it possible to avoid gently a threat when you are attacked, robbed, and killed?

Father Andrii: We need to understand whom God considers meek and try to become meek once and for all.

Chrystyna: Why does Jesus call meek people who often suffer happy?

Father Andrii: A meek person is one who has the power to love even those who hate him or her, especially adversaries, attackers, and enemies. Remember Christ's words: "But I say to you, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'" (Mt 5: 44). The love of this person is stronger than the hatred of adversaries. By divine power, such a person is able to control his or her anger and the desire for revenge.

Marichka: I understood that meek people do not get irritated and do not irritate others...

Father Andrii: Meekness is a person's calm state which is full of Christian love, when he or she is not irritated and does not complain about God and people. Christian meekness is manifested in that we refuse to repay evil for evil. As a consequence, the avalanche of hatred, anger, and sin comes to a complete stop. With a positive attitude a meek person achieves inner peace, giving even aggressors an opportunity for reconciliation.



Blessed are the meek

Meekness is a positive attitude in the face of life's unfortunate circumstances.
The earth is the place where a person lives. A person based on meekness transforms the earth.
With hands being free of the sword, a person receives an olive branch from an angel, symbol of a renewed earth.



Freedom from anger is victory over nature and insensibility to insults, acquired by struggles and sweat. Meekness is an immovable state of soul which remains unaffected whether in dishonour or in praise.

John Climacus, *The Ladder*

Martyn: It is impossible to live like that. I think Christ speaks of a love that is meek directed toward one's enemies as an ideal. But to achieve this in reality is extremely difficult...

Father Andrii: In fact, it is impossible for a person. But “what is impossible for mortals is possible for God” (Lk 18:27). In the gift of meekness God teaches us to see his image in another person and, then, in our brother or sister. Yes, this person means to hurt me, he or she wants me to die. Yes, his or her behaviour is cruel. But if God looks at the righteous and sinners alike, then wanting to become like him, we by his power can see other people in the same way.

Dmytro: In a meek way, you can see all people with love only by being at some distance from them. And when you find yourself in danger, then here, love disappears...

Father Andrii: Instead, anger, hatred, offensive remarks against one's neighbour do happen; we consider these justified reactions to the threat posed. However, that is how we defend ourselves, while a meek person is one who does not defend himself or herself as much as others.

Serhii: How are we to understand this?

Father Andrii: To defend those who would harm us is to sympathize with them, to pray for them. We keep showing them love and respect through our words and actions. Let us remember how Christ prayed to his heavenly Father at the time of his Crucifixion: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34). Our enemies do not really know what they are doing when they are ruled by immoderation, greed, vanity, and similar thoughts. However, these enemies really are our neighbours, about which the Lord teaches: “...just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). As we treat our enemies and opponents, so we will treat God himself in the end.

Serhii: But with this meek behaviour will we be beaten, eliminated, and killed by our enemies or those who want to harm us?

Father Andrii: A Christian, of course, has the right to defend himself or herself and other people when, for example, it is a question of an armed attack, or some danger to life, and so on. However, our meek attitude is capable of humbling even the cruelest of human hearts. Confirmation of this can be found in history when Christians were being persecuted, when enemies repeatedly not only stopped persecuting Christians, but they were also converted. Christians simply behaved as Christ had advised them: “if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also” (Mt 5:39).



Saints Borys and Hlib

Martyn: Actually, these words of Jesus have really confused me somehow...

Father Andrii: To offer the other cheek is to maintain selfcontrol, without, in turn, giving in to aggression. In meekness, love does not pass away: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21).



If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

Rom 12:18-19

Serhii: Then do we need to practise carefully self-restraint and self-control in order to always be meek?

Father Andrii: Well, it is not just about restraint. Blessed is one who is completely in control of himself or herself. In history, at the end of the day, the people who ultimately kept on being triumphant were the ones capable of controlling their desires and instincts. It is said about Moses in the Book of Numbers: “Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth” (Num 12:3). He was not crude; Moses may have been incredibly furious, but he kept his anger under control. It is written in the Proverbs of Solomon: “One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and one whose temper is controlled than one who captures a city” (Prov 16:32).



Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Mt 11:29



The blessed Volodymyr Pryima with his wife and their children, Anna-Irena and Roman

The blessed martyr Volodymyr Pryima, patron of lay persons, was an active parishioner. And the relationships, which they fostered within the family of this worthy and revered man, his fellow villagers attempted to genuinely imitate.



The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the marks of a Christian's mature spiritual life and action that flow from the person's cooperation with divine grace. In order to live as a true Christian and bear witness to Christ, both the assistance of the Holy Spirit as well as the openness and effort of a human being are needed. The apostle Paul teaches the following about the fruits of the Holy Spirit: "... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity [goodness], faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22-23).

Christ — Our Pascha, 721

Daryna: Father, how can we achieve such control over all our emotions, impulses, and desires?

Father Andrii: With the help of Christian spiritual training (ascesis).

Serhii: What is Christian spiritual training (ascesis)?

Father Andrii: The word "ascesis" comes from the Greek language meaning "exercise", "training." It is a set of certain spiritual exercises when we cooperate with God to accept the gift of meekness and to be strengthened in it. For us, it is a kind of training for the soul, of exercise in the virtues. This constant desire to be more perfect is confirmed by concrete efforts and actions. Spiritual training (ascesis) is a Christian's tireless struggle with his or her flaws, passions, and inclinations to sin.

The spiritual Fathers teach about the eight basic passions that cause all sinful deeds of people. These are gluttony, lust, avarice, melancholy, anger, acedia, vainglory, and pride.

In the spiritual struggle, with the help of God's grace and the help of spiritual training (ascesis), we conquer the passions, but rather, we acquire the virtues. They are temperance, wholeness of being, generosity, joy in the Holy Spirit, long-suffering, cheerfulness of spirit, humble-mindedness, and humility.

Dmytro: What exactly is spiritual training (ascesis)?

Father Andrii: Spiritual training (ascesis) includes prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a state of constant repentance and trust in God's power, mercy, and forgiveness.

Marichka: And what can we achieve through asceticism?

Father Andrii: We shall inherit the land, in other words, we shall achieve the blessedness of the meek.



The truth of your deeds made you for your flock a rule of faith and an image of meekness, a teacher of continence. And so you gained the heights through humility, riches through poverty, father and bishop Nicholas. Intercede with Christ our God for the salvation of our souls.

Troparion of the hierarch Nicholas of Myra in Lycia

A meek person is one who has the power to love even those who do not love him or her. By divine power, such a person is able to control his or her anger and the desire for revenge.

With a positive attitude, a meek person achieves inner peace, providing attackers an opportunity for reconciliation.

To offer the other cheek is to maintain self-control, without, in turn, giving in to aggression.

Control over all one's emotions, impulses, and desires is achieved through Christian spiritual training (asceticism).

The basic ascetic practices are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Theme 16

Blessed Are They Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness



The prophet Elias during a terrible drought, considered a punishment for idolatry, settles in the desert by a wadi from which he is able to have a drink of water. Ravens bring food to him. This episode from the prophet's life encourages us to trust God and to adhere to the truth (1 Kings 17:6).



For you alone are sinless, your justice is everlasting justice, and your word is truth.

Order of Panakhyda, Prayer for the Deceased



Care for the poor and defense of those who cannot defend themselves, equality-human solidarity — this is only the right of justice and the love for one's neighbour, on which the whole Gospel law stands.

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi, *Pastoral Letter to the Clergy* — “On the Social Question”

Father Andrii: I would like each one of you, at your leisure, to have another look around and really notice everything in Saint Sophia Church, Rome. The mosaics, the iconostasis, and all objects used during the divine services focus our attention and make us curious about them. We seek to know them on a deeper level, to discover the “truth” about them. In its depth, this truth is the truth of Divine Revelation. No wonder Christ speaks about the “hunger and thirst” for the truth. Who among you knows what this is about?

Daryna: Might it be about Christ's words: “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied”?

Father Andrii: That is correct. Christ also teaches, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32). And, in addition, Christ declares: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). To know the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son sent by him, through Holy Scripture and the life of the Church, means to live truthfully, in the truth. He or she who knows God and his truth and embodies this truth in his or her daily life, will be satisfied with it.



Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness

A truth request is the most noble request of a person, which will always be satiated by the Lord. The angel of the Lord, handing the thirsty person a full water jar, satisfies this thirst for the truth.

Marichka: So many people know how things should be done properly. Yet they do not do so — due to inconvenience and fear of losing something...

Father Andrii: You know, Marichka, the truth is not a set of rules of conduct, but a relationship with the living God. And so, people do not have the strength to live by the truth unless they draw it from the Lord. They give in to the temptations of the devil and the passions. The only way out is to hunger and thirst for the living Truth — God. These feelings are the fruit of divine grace and at the same time the beginning of liberating people from falsehood. If a person begins a spiritual struggle, then he or she chooses the path of righteousness. One who follows this path will avoid injustice, deception, and shall carry truth into the world.

Martyn: It is said in a Beatitude that “they will be satisfied.” And how can one be satisfied with the truth?

Father Andrii: It is to be filled with the goods of God’s kingdom already in this world. Material goods will not satisfy a person. And so, he or she becomes despondent, depressed, and dissatisfied with life. A person tries to

escape from this by way of entertainment, fun and games. However, only spiritual goods satisfy. According to Saint Augustine: “My heart is restless until it rests in you, O God,” whereas the Psalmist says: “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God” (Ps 42:2).



Poet and literary critic Vasyl Stus was extremely sensitive to the injustice and the lies of the Soviet regime. At the premiere screening of Serhii Paradzhanov's film, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, he yelled out: “Where is the truth? Why do they not allow to speak the truth?” After that he was expelled from his institution and subsequently imprisoned, deprived of the right to creative expression.

Chrystyna: Father, even so how can we be happy in a world where truth is lacking and where we often experience injustice?

Father Andrii: Growth in the truth motivates a person to radiate it outward. Harm and injustice will always retreat against God's truth. To make the truth more widely known is to take an active public stance, not to remain silent about wrongdoing, not to promote lies and corruption, even to be ready to give your life for the truth.



The blessed Sisters Olympia Bida and Lavrentia Herasymiv of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Pure Virgin Mary, living in exile in the Siberian village of Kharsk, wrote with conviction: “One thing we know is that we suffer for the faith and for the work of God.”

Serhii: Then in order to defend your people from invaders — does this mean to seek the truth and give your life for it?

Father Andrii: To fight for the freedom of your people, to defend the autonomy and independence of your homeland, even at the cost of your life, means to show the greatest love. “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13). But he or she who loves has fulfilled all truth, for love is the fulfillment of the Law (compare Rom 13:10).



But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

Jn 3:21



The moral criteria of political life in a democratic society should become such social virtues as: responsibility, honesty, justice, mutual respect, diligence in work, truth, a sense of duty, solidarity, and concern for the

common good. Democratic society requires moral values for its survival and growth. It is responsible to defend them.

Christ — Our Pascha, 935

To know God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son sent by him, through Holy Scripture and the life of the Church means to live in the truth.

He or she who knows God and his truth and embodies this truth in his or her daily life has set out on a righteous path.

Growing in the truth motivates a person to radiate the truth outward.

To make the truth more widely known is to take an active public stance, not to remain silent about wrongdoing, not to promote lies and corruption, even to be ready to give your life for the truth.

Theme 17

Blessed Are the Merciful



The Venerable Mother Josaphata Hordashevksa, co-foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, dedicated her entire monastic life to the mission of her monastic community: “Educate the heart of the people and serve where the need is the greatest.”



Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you ... You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Mt 5:42, 44



Whatever you have contributed to the poor, therefore, is profitable to you; whatever you have diminished it by is gain to you. You feed yourself with the food that you have given to the poor, for the one who is merciful to the poor is fed himself, and there is fruit already in these things. Mercy is sown on the earth and germinates in heaven; it is planted in the poor and sprouts forth in God's presence.

Ambrose of Milan, *Homily on Naboth the Jezreelite*

Chrystyna: It is very noble to help those in need. I'm referring to the collection taken up just now at a divine service for a sick woman religious.

Father Andrii: Indeed, Christians show mercy, guided by Christ's words: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

Serhii: Is mercy a manifestation of Christian love for one's neighbour?

Father Andrii: Mercy makes us like our heavenly Father, as Christ commands: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36). Through merciful love we accept our neighbour with his or her weaknesses.



Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

Mt 25:34-36

Let us be reminded of Christ's words from the parable of the awe-inspiring judgment: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Therefore, if we want to find God in the world, to see him, to touch him, to serve him, then let us

find people in need; let us help them — in this way “we will serve” God himself.

Martyn: And what concrete works of mercy can I do for other people?

Father Andrii: Church tradition teaches us about seven spiritual works of mercy and seven corporal works of mercy.



Blessed are the merciful

Mercy is a manifestation of one's self-sacrificial and selfless love for one's neighbour.

The allegorical image of bread given to those in need is understood as mercy.



You came down from on high, O Merciful One, and accepted three days of burial to free us from our sufferings. O Lord, our life and our resurrection, glory be to you.

Resurrectional Troparion, Tone 8

Chrystyna: What are the spiritual works of mercy?

Father Andrii: The first spiritual work of mercy is “to admonish the sinner.” This, above all, has to do with helping one's neighbor to renounce sin. It is important to do this work with love and humility. The apostle James affirms, “If anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from

wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:19-20).

The second spiritual work of mercy is "to instruct the ignorant," that is, to teach those about Christ who have not yet known him, to guide him or her on the path of Christian living. As stated in the Book of Daniel, those who lead many to righteousness will shine "like the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

The third spiritual work of mercy is "to counsel the doubtful." This refers to counsel aimed at discerning God's will through Holy Scripture and through the teachings of the Church.

The fourth spiritual work of mercy is "to comfort the afflicted" in some sort of grief or suffering. Consolation is often expressed in the ability to listen patiently to one's neighbour, to accompany him or her, to always be there, especially in difficult times, making Jesus Christ present, who is with us "always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20).

The fifth spiritual work of mercy is "to bear wrongs patiently." This is a great virtue. Nevertheless, for our patience not to become partial to an offender's impunity, we still need to defend ourselves: "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" (Jn 18:23).

The sixth spiritual work of mercy is "to forgive offenses from the heart." In the *Our Father* prayer we say: "and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." At the same time, the Lord explains, "for if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt 6:14-15). He also commands us to forgive seventy-seven times (compare Mt 18:22). Forgiving trespasses means overcoming the desire for revenge and feelings of resentment as we treat those who have offended us with love.

And finally, the seventh spiritual work of mercy is "to pray for the living and the dead." Saint Paul advises us to pray for all without exception, because God "desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).



The pastors of prisons

Gathered together on the icon are the figures of the blessed priestmartyrs, who even during imprisonment attempted to serve and create a community of co-suffering, tenderness, and love.

Marichka: Also, if you would be so kind to explain the corporal works of mercy in a few words.

Father Andrii: The Saviour teaches us about these works of mercy in the parable of the awe-inspiring judgment (compare Mt 25:31-46).

The first and second corporal works of mercy are interconnected in order to “to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty.” This aid applies not only to those who are starving but also to people who are frequently malnourished. Christ teaches, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise” (Lk 3:11).

The third corporal work of mercy is “to clothe the naked.” In fact, not all people have the right clothes. But mercy is not about giving away what is in excess and is unnecessary, but it is about sharing the clothing that we even need. The apostle James encourages us to be generous: “If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?” (Jas 2:15-16).

The fourth corporal work of mercy is “to shelter the traveller.” There are always people who, for various reasons, do not have a roof over their heads: refugees, the homeless, victims of military or any other armed conflict. The doors of our homes must be open to these people.



The Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy

- 1. Admonish the sinner**
- 2. Instruct the ignorant**
- 3. Counsel the doubtful**
- 4. Comfort the afflicted**
- 5. Bear wrongs patiently**
- 6. Forgive offenses from the heart**
- 7. Pray for the living and the dead**

The Seven Corporal Works of Mercy

- 1. Feed the hungry**
- 2. Give drink to the thirsty**
- 3. Clothe the naked**
- 4. Shelter the traveller**
- 5. Minister to the sick**
- 6. Visit the imprisoned**

The fifth corporal work of mercy is “to minister to the sick.” A sick person, in addition to being in pain, also experiences loneliness and often fears death. He or she is overwhelmed by limited opportunities and feelings of being useless. The time and help we give to a sick person will be priceless medicine during an illness.

The sixth corporal work of mercy is “to visit the imprisoned.” Visiting prisoners helps them to appreciate their human dignity and encourages them to change their lives for the better. The imprisoned need to be reassured that there is still room for change. If a prisoner is innocent, it is important to help to get his or her case reviewed. In the past, Christians made donations as a ransom to free the slaves.

Finally, the seventh corporal work of mercy is “to bury the dead.” Christ had no place for his burial. Yet, Joseph of Arimathea gave him his tomb and arranged for Jesus’ funeral too (compare Jn 19:38-42). Why is it so important to bury a person with dignity? This is because the human body is “a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19). By paying our last respects to a human body, we pay homage to God, the Maker of this body. We also

express our faith in the physical resurrection of the dead at the second coming of Christ.



The blessed priest-martyr Nykyta Budka, being the first bishop for Greek Catholics in Canada, united Ukrainians around the Church: he founded evening schools and hospitals, he took care of poor children and orphans, and he published spiritual literature. And for those who were considering emigration, he issued a souvenir having to do with the first, very practical, steps on their sought-after land — *Guide for Ruthenians Travelling to Canada*, which had been very popular.

A human being in his or her life is called to become like God.

God is merciful, and we are called to be merciful to our neighbour.

Being merciful means to sympathize with people in need.

The concrete works of mercy that we can do are the seven spiritual works of mercy and the seven corporal works of mercy.



Christian love is the foundation of all interpersonal relations and all social life. It is precisely love that discloses the dignity of the human person and

teaches us how to love him or her. Acts of mercy are the social manifestations of Christian love. The religious character of acts of mercy stems from the fact that Jesus Christ identified himself with every destitute person: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). Love for the sake of Christ is the primary motivation for acts of mercy.

Christ — Our Pascha, 936



But as you have boundless mercy, free me from every danger as I cry out:
Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me.

Akathist Hymn to Our Lord Jesus Christ, Kontakion 1

Theme 18

Blessed Are the Pure of Heart



The holy great martyr Catherine

Living surrounded by pagan values, Catherine wanted to marry the best husband. One elder suggested that she get acquainted with the heavenly Bridegroom. For this, she had to complete the path of cleansing her heart and of being baptized. And then, in accordance with Tradition, Catherine saw her Bridegroom and the Bridegroom of every Christian soul.



Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Ps 50:12

Marichka: What a beautiful and splendidly adorned Saint Sophia's Cathedral!

Chrystyna: And how diligent are those who maintain this cleanliness!

Father Andrii: The church's cleanliness is important because it reflects humankind's inner cleanliness — the purity of the human heart, which the Lord Jesus Christ calls blessedness: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God."

Serhii: Father, can you clarify for me when my heart is pure? How can I be sure of that?

Father Andrii: A pure heart manifests itself in sensitivity to temptations and thoughts along with resistance to sin. Then our conscience will be calm.



Conscience is the best guide for determining accurately whether to say Yes or No. The firm foundation of conscience is an upright life.

Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromateis*



I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Ps 16:8

Chrystyna: And how do we acquire such a clear conscience?

Father Andrii: The main ways of forming a conscience are to communicate with your spiritual director, go to Confession and discern your thoughts in this way.

Martyn: Why must we discern our thoughts?

Father Andrii: Thoughts should be discerned in order to distinguish, in the light of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which of them are good and which are evil. If we do not discern an evil thought in advance, then it will become a temptation for us, grow into a passion, and end as a sinful deed. But good thoughts bring us closer to realizing and accepting God's will.

Chrystyna: And how does one know God's will?

Father Andrii: For this you need to read Holy Scripture and live an intensely spiritual life. Speaking with a spiritual director is very worthwhile.



Blessed are the pure of heart

The pure of heart are sincere, genuine people in whom there is no wickedness. Such people “see God,” who reveals himself to them directly in prayerful contemplation and in their neighbours. A person's pure heart is portrayed allegorically as a lily, by contrast the fleeing snake is representative of the harmful attacks of the evil one.



If we give our assent to evil thoughts, then we sin. The beginning of every sin is the acceptance of an evil thought coupled with the desire to bring it to life. If a person does not take possession of an evil thought, this thought is not a sin but only a temptation.

Marichka: But is a spiritual director a confessor?

Father Andrii: Not necessarily, although it is often the case. Spiritual directors have experience living a spiritual life, they are our mentors. By listening to their advice, we learn to reach a purification of the heart, the place where the Holy Spirit dwells in us (compare 1 Cor 6:19). It is difficult for us alone not to succumb to temptations and to struggle with passions and sins. However, a spiritually experienced person can help us. That is why it is very important for a Christian to have a spiritual director.

Serhii: And, with such a pure heart, will we really be able to see the invisible God?

Father Andrii: The vision of God begins with faith in Christ as Lord. As we grow in the faith and reach a purification of the heart, we can be made worthy of contemplating God — to experience his presence in people and in the world.



We have seen the true light. We have received the heavenly Spirit. We have found the true faith. We worship the undivided Trinity for having saved us.

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom



“Save your people, O God, and bless your inheritance...” The Divine Liturgy

To see God in every person is to see in him or her the beauty of the image of God. To see God in the world is to keep recognizing in the beauty of creation the beauty of its Creator.



But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.

Mt 15:18-19

A clean heart appears in a peaceful conscience.

A properly formed conscience helps to recognize sin and to prevent it.

A conscience is formed in one's spiritual life.

Speaking with one's spiritual director plays an important role in one's spiritual life.

At the peak of our spiritual life, we can contemplate God with a clean heart.



Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi is surrounded by members of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization. Plast Camp “Sokil” in the 1930s

Theme 19

Blessed Are the Peacemakers



The priest-martyr Saint Josaphat Kuntsevych believed that the believer who is hostile to his brother in the faith cannot be in peace with his Father. The sincere longing for peace and unity of the Church, because of which the archbishop of Polotsk died a martyr's death, was rooted in his own unity with God and in inner peace.



The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to kill those who walk uprightly; their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

Ps 37:14-15



Grant peace to your world, to your churches, to the priests, to our nation under God, to our government, and to all your people, for all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from you, the Father of lights, and we give glory, thanks and worship to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, Prayer Behind the Ambo

Serhii: The next Beatitude of Christ is very close to me: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” I want to become a soldier in order to maintain peace on earth.

Father Andrii: Peace is much more than the absence of war. True peace begins with inner peace. This peace was brought to earth by the incarnate Son of God — Jesus Christ, in his Resurrection he gave it to his apostles.

Daryna: Father Andrii, when I pray sincerely, I feel at peace. Is this peace that I feel in prayer also an inner peace?

Father Andrii: Yes, of course. Inner peace is a gift from God that we are called to share with our neighbours and in this way become peacemakers. Anyone who promotes God’s peace everywhere is called a son or daughter of God by the Saviour.

Dmytro: If all people had this inner peace, then, surely, all wars, hostilities, and divisions would be a thing of the past...

Father Andrii: Truthfully, that would be great. But sin, which has entered the world, brings with it division and hostility. A lack of consent and an

unwillingness to seek peace, a lack of respect between people and human pride lead to confrontation and wars. For a Christian, war is unacceptable because it contradicts the Christian concept of peace, and it also carries the threat of a global catastrophe. Dialogue alone is the Christian way to overcome conflicts. To insist on “using force to get to peace” by waging war is hypocrisy and a crime against God.



Blessed are the peacemakers

Peacemakers are people who experience God's peace and promote peace on earth.

The Son of God brings peace into the world. A person who receives his peace becomes a child of God.

The ruler represents the Son of God, and his subjects represent the citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

Chrystyna: I completely agree with that. But what if the conflict is not overcome peacefully?

Father Andrii: Unfortunately, this happens quite often. Christians must do everything possible to avoid armed conflict that brings about suffering, ruin, and death. However, they must be ready to defend their nation from their aggressors. At the same time, Christians must demonstrate personal courage and refuse to take part in acts of aggression by their country's army. One who has experienced peace with the Lord God can easily distinguish the necessary safeguarding of life from the sinful desire to put the other into captivity using arms and is therefore able not to be subjected to the propaganda of aggression.



Preservation of peace is the obligation of every person, but especially of the Christian. Everyone is called to make a contribution toward establishing and strengthening peace through concrete gestures of peace in families, the workplace, in communities, in civic life, and in national and international organizations. First and foremost, peace should rule the human heart. The way to strengthen peace is through tireless prayer for peace, as well as through the cooperation of Christians with those who sincerely desire to preserve peace.

Christ — Our Pascha, 988



My peace I give you...

Jn 14:27

Serhii: Would it potentially be very difficult for a soldier to be a good Christian?

Father Andrii: A Christian soldier is always a peacemaker and a defender, which is exceedingly not easy. A Christian who decides to dedicate his or her life to military service will never be a mercenary. He or she will not harm peaceful people. He or she will not become a puppet in the hands of someone else. He or she will not become a cold-blooded murderer. To be a soldier is a great honour but also a responsibility in the eyes of God and to their nation.



Let us associate with those who piously cultivate peace, and not with those whose peaceful intentions are but a mask.

Clement of Rome, The First Epistle to the Corinthians



The blessed priest-martyr Omelian Kovch, being imprisoned, asked not to plead for his release. While in the Majdanek concentration camp, he was happy that he was helping prisoners to discover inner peace with the assistance of the Mysteries which he celebrated, and he asked to pray for those who created that awful system.

Inner peace is a gift from God and a guarantee of peace on earth.

Sin causes a violation of peace.

War is never a means to achieve peace.

The use of arms is justified only in self-defense and for the preservation of life.



Future defenders — reconnaissance cadets and special operations during tactical training

Theme 20

Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted for the Sake of Righteousness



Patriarch Josyf Slipyi, returning to Rome after eighteen years of being in prisons and Siberian camps, gathered the dispersed “throughforeign-lands” faithful of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, organized and brought many projects into existence, among which are the Ukrainian Catholic University in Rome and Saint Sophia’s Cathedral, and to generations that are to come he gave the command: “Ask for great things!”



The struggle of *confessors* is the fight for truth and its defence against various heresies, as well as the courageous profession of faith in Christ in times of persecution.

Christ — Our Pascha, 319



In Christianity, holiness is connected with witnessing to the faith, often expressed through martyrdom. The word *martyr* (from the Greek, *martys*, meaning *witness*) emphasizes not so much the fact of suffering as testifying to Christ. “The choirs of saints have shown youthfulness and fortitude in suffering. They have accepted painful wounds for the sake of incorruptible crowns of glory and beauty...”

Christ — Our Pascha, 317

Marichka: I agree with the previous Beatitudes. But Beatitudes like, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” and “Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil word against you falsely because of me” are difficult to understand.

Father Andrii: These are difficult to understand if we equate blessedness with pleasure. And that is not always the case.

Chrystyna: Perhaps you have in mind the martyrs?

Father Andrii: Yes, but not only them. The Christian Church began to show a particular reverence to those who by their lives gave witness to a faithfulness to Christ. Among them were those who gave their lives for the faith and those who suffered for the faith, publicly professing it. We call them martyrs and confessors. This ascetic struggle begins with patiently carrying your Cross in life. The example of the martyrs has inspired and continues to inspire other Christians to an ascetic way of life. This ascetic struggle begins with patiently carrying one’s Cross in life. And you, Chrystyna, can do the same.

Serhii: But if I live in a country where they do not persecute me for believing in Christ, then how can I be persecuted for the truth today?

Father Andrii: Persecution for the truth happens everywhere and at all times. Perhaps you — or at least some of you — have experienced mockery

or disparaging comments for going to church, for praying, for wearing a Cross, for reading Holy Scripture, and so on.

Marichka: To be honest, sometimes I myself was ashamed to make the sign of the Cross near a church in the presence of friends or to greet them using a Christian greeting. I did not want to look like a “white crow” or a “black sheep.”

Father Andrii: Strange as it may seem, many Christians are embarrassed by their faith. They lack the courage to profess their faith. Christians often must “swim against the current” at school, at university, in the workplace, and in society. They need to be willing to accept humbly belittling comments for their faith. To be a Christian means to follow in the footsteps of Christ, even if they lead to Golgotha.



Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Being persecuted for the sake of righteousness is God's gift of martyrdom and profession. This gift carries the inexpressible joy of the kingdom of God.

Martyrs and confessors are depicted in the allegory of a man who accepts the palm of martyrdom and the crown of heavenly reward from an angel. Persecutors wield the rod of violence and false witnessing, allegorically depicted as the fire of lies and the serpent's hissing of malice.



Blessed, then, and noble are all the martyrdoms that have taken place by the will of God; for we must devoutly ascribe to God power over all things. For who would not admire their nobility and patience and love of their Lord?

The Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna

Dmytro: Do many Christians “go to Golgotha” today?

Father Andrii: There are hundreds and thousands of them. In Greek, the word “martyr” (μάρτυς — *martys*) means witness. Martyrs and confessors are witnesses of Christ, for whom they are ready to accept suffering and even death. The persecution of Christians began in the time of Christ and continues to this day. Almost every day there is news about the suffering of our brothers and sisters in the faith, as this news fills our hearts with sorrow, but, at the same time, we admire them for their courage and heroism.



When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. But filled with the Holy Spirit, he [i.e., Stephen] gazed into heaven, saw the glory of God and Jesus, ... and said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” But they ... rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. ... They were stoning Stephen, he prayed: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

Acts 7:54-60



O holy martyrs, who competed well and have won your crowns, intercede with the Lord that he have mercy on our souls.

Order of Crowning, Troparion

Martyn: Father, along with the martyrs you mentioned confessors. What is the difference between them?

Father Andrii: One who has endured sufferings and died for Christ is called a martyr. We call him or her who, despite sufferings, courageously witnessed to his or her faith in God a confessor of the faith. Have a look, next to Saint Sophia's Church, there is a museum in memory of Patriarch Josyf Slipyi, confessor of the faith. In museum photos we see a Christian whom the God-fighting authorities persecuted for his faith. He led the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church during a period of horrific persecutions, he endured imprisonment and exile, but he did not submit and did not make a compromise with evil. The life of this confessor and his courageous witnessing impressed the whole world.

Daryna: One can only admire the Patriarch's determination. Clearly, the Lord was with him and supported him.

Father Andrii: The example of Patriarch Josyf, as well as the example of the new martyrs and confessors of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, inspires me, a priest, to be faithful to God and to the Church. We also have examples of numerous lay people, in particular the martyrs of Pratulyn, who at the cost of their own lives defended faithfulness to their own Church. You can be proud that you belong to the Church of martyrs. Try to witness to your faith in the company of friends and acquaintances.



Patriarch Josyf Slipyi is seen together with the bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church during the transfer of the corrupt remains of Metropolitan Josyf Sembratovych to Saint Sophia's Cathedral on November 18, 1973

Blesseds are martyrs and confessors who have been persecuted for the truth.

Blessed is every Christian who leads an ascetic way of life.

We must always be ready to suffer for the truth.

Patriarch Josyf Slipyi is a shining example of professing the faith in today's world.

Theme 21

The End of the Beatitudes: Rejoice and Be Glad



The blessed Ukrainian martyrs of the twentieth century



Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, “Rejoice!” Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Phil 4:4-6

Marichka: The Lord concludes the Beatitudes with a call and a promise: “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.” Rejoicing and being glad is so natural for us! Joy and gladness are synonymous with happiness for me.

Father Andrii: Christian joy is not only a feeling of happiness but also a fruit of the Holy Spirit. This means that joy does not depend on external circumstances and our changing moods. Joy is always with us.

Dmytro: How can we always rejoice when we live in a world full of evil and injustice? It is very difficult to stay happy when so many people fall sick and die.

Father Andrii: Actually, there is a lot of suffering in the world, but it should not deprive us of Christian joy, which brings with it the hope of God’s help. One of the Christian symbols is the anchor. What do you think it means?

Daryna: The first Christians used to depict an anchor during persecution. It is, of course, about hope.

Father Andrii: Great answer, Daryna! As the anchor holds the ship in the middle of the waves of the sea, so Christian hope strengthens us in any hardships and sufferings. And even the greatest obstacles will not take away from us the joy in Christ.



Being the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets, O Christ our God, you fully achieved the whole of the Father's plan of salvation, fill our hearts with joy and gladness, always, now and for ever and ever. Amen.

Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, Prayer at the Consumption of the Holy Gifts



The Spirit-Comforter (or Advocate) is the source of the virtue of Christian joy, which liberates from the passion of melancholy. He grants one the joy of experiencing closeness with God.

Christ — Our Pascha, 767



Martyn: And what prevents us from remaining in the joy you are talking about?

Father Andrii: Being lazy about prayer, searching for joy in earthly things...

Chrystyna: For many of my acquaintances, Christianity is associated with something gloomy and joyless. I try my best to convince them otherwise.

Father Andrii: The reason for this is a superficial awareness of the teachings of Christ, which gives rise to many myths about Christians as sad and unhappy people. But not only that. We, who have not yet become joyful witnesses of the risen Christ, are partly responsible for this. If we perceive life with complaints, then we are discouraged by difficulties and sufferings,

we rebuke people and condemn them without placing our hope in God; this, then, distorts the luminous image of Christianity in the eyes of the world.

Serhii: Does this mean that to be a good Christian you should be happy?

Father Andrii: Someone may have a happier disposition, and others may have a less cheerful disposition. But being joyful is not a matter of disposition. Through faith we joyfully accept everything as a gift from God. The Son of God has already brought people the joy of salvation, resurrection, and transfiguration. Our divine services, which have a Paschal and joyful character, are evidence of this.

Dmytro: So, the Church does not forbid having fun and joking around?

Father Andrii: Of course not. Even fasting, when loud entertainment is forbidden, is dedicated to the elimination of all that hinders true joy. For as long as sin remains — the source of sorrow, can joy really be sincere? Examples of such insincere joy are brawls, laughing at others, shameful jokes, and anecdotes. After all, laughter, like a joke, can be friendly, but it can also mock. It can be funny, but it can also be insulting.

In any event, it is time once again for us to get going. A trip to Kyiv awaits us, where our pilgrimage will come to an end.



For happiness is not a matter of lording it over one's neighbours, or desiring to have more than weaker people, or possessing wealth and using force against one's inferiors. No one is able to imitate God in these matters; on the contrary, these things are alien to his greatness. But one who takes up a neighbour's burden, one who wishes to benefit someone who is worse off in something which one is oneself better off, one who provides to those in need things that one has received from God, and thus becomes a god to those who receive them — this one is an imitator of God.

The Epistle to Diognetus



The parable about the wise and foolish virgins (Mt 25:1-13)

Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Joy and hope give strength to endure suffering.

In the fullness of joy, we do not become inward looking, but we share joy with others.

Fasting, by removing the sadness of sin, is an opportunity to discover spiritual joy.



Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ Kyiv, 2013

After overcoming their own doubts and fears along the way to Emmaus, the disciples witnessed Christ's Resurrection. The joy of meeting the risen Lord, which was kindled in their hearts, prompted them to share this good

news with the community of the Saviour's faithful disciples and then to spread that joy throughout the world.

The Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Kyiv is a witness to the living faith of our ancestors. It spread long ago from holy Prince Volodymyr's baptismal font across our Ukrainian land and continues to quench the spiritual thirst of the faithful of our Church, no matter what part of the world their hearts continue beating today. We, the heirs of the Kyivan Church in communion with the See of the apostle Peter, confidently and joyfully walk along the paths of life, drawing on the spiritual heritage of Kyivan Christianity.

Conclusion



Mosaic on the facade of the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, Kyiv



Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be

proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Lk 24:45-48

After praying for the last time in the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, the young pilgrims together with Father Andrii admired the majestic Dnipro River for a long time. They felt the power of the faith that brought them all together. Here in Kyiv, they reached the sources of this faith in Saint Sophia’s Cathedral. They lived their hope in the Lord, bound by the blood of martyrs and confessors, in the crypt of Saint George’s Cathedral in Lviv. They were filled with universal love, which compassionately embraces all people, heaven and earth, Ukraine and established settlements, by contemplating the holy mosaics in the Saint Sophia of Rome. And now they are in Kyiv once more, now on the left bank of the Dnipro River.



In front of the majestic facade of the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, everyone finally raised their eyes to the mosaic of the risen Saviour, who triumphantly emerges from the tomb, overcoming death itself. Sensing an opportunity for a fresh beginning, which had presented itself to the participants of the pilgrimage, Father Andrii turned to his young friends:

Father Andrii: My friends, it is time for us to say our goodbyes. But not between us and Christ. Can each one of you offer a closing thought?

Chrystyna: The Lord has helped me realize the unspeakable power of his forgiveness and the freedom of a man or a woman who can forgive.

Nothing can compare with the liberating power of forgiveness. I am free and full of joy.



Serhii: I have been strengthened in my faith and discovered the power of the spirit that inspires service. So, I want to serve God and my nation in the Armed Forces. I want to be a soldier of the light and of the good.

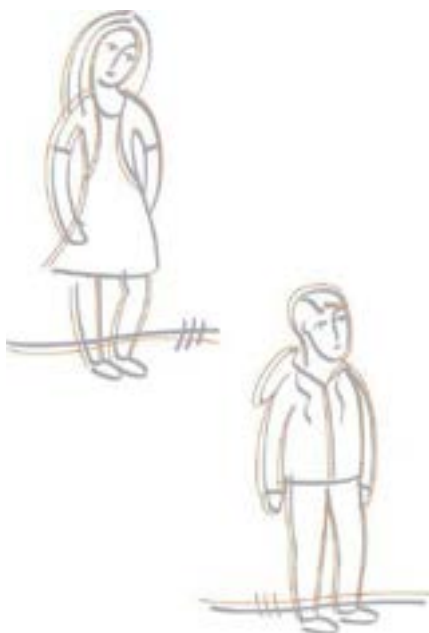
Martyn: This pilgrimage has taught me to plunge into the depths of faith, like into the waters of the Dnipro River. I try again and again to hang on to the Ukrainian sources from where my parents originate. On a personal level I felt the holiness of this land with some trepidation. I will cherish this experience my whole life.

Marichka: I tried to record and write down everything I saw. Maybe someday I will publish my story of journeying with Christ and with all of you. I also felt the calling from God for my future professional development. I want to build a better world in a circle of people whom God will provide me with to do this.



Dmytro: Thanks to the pilgrimage, I was able to ease the pain of losing kin. Thanks to you, I felt that I was not alone. We are one Church and one people. And this encourages me.

Daryna: I am convinced how much the Lord loves me and each one of you. Being so far from home, I understood how much my parents love me and how much I love them. And I have become stronger in my vocation — to dedicate my life to serving God and people. I want to share God's love with the whole world.



Father Andrii: I also thank God for all of you, for the gift of meeting you, for the new knowledge of God through you. I have come to know him so often wounded, in the infirmities and circumstances of each of us. And, at the same time, I felt an abundance of God's love, truth and goodness in your hearts and life's spontaneity.

Goodness me... Our pilgrimage has come to an end. Having said that, everything really is just beginning. To make a pilgrimage with the Risen Christ is the daily recognition of God's Wisdom in the destiny of every man and woman and in the history of our nation. It was not that we came here, it was the Lord himself who gathered us from all over the world. Like the two disciples of Jesus who traveled to Emmaus that unique morning — the first of the week — the Lord showed us a way to overcome personal uncertainty and confusion in life toward a deeper understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. So, do not be afraid to reach the heights of faith, to strive for the heights of Sophia — the Wisdom of God. Before us is the bright Resurrection, according to the apostle Paul: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9). Returning to our homes and to our daily lives, let us be witnesses of the Risen Saviour in the world and in the communities to which the Lord sends us. Let us reflect:



This is our world, and we are responsible for it. Christ awaits us and our faith. Our time has come — we walk. And we walk with Christ!

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